SIRDAR AND KHALIFA

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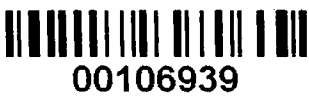
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SIRDAR AND KHALIFA

OR THE

RE-CONQUEST OF THE SOUDAN

For Circulation in India and the Colonies only.

THE SIRDAR, MAJOR-GENERAL SIR H. H. KITCHENER, K.C.M.G., ETC., ETC.

SIRDAR AND KHALIFA

OR THE

RE-CONQUEST OF THE SOUDAN

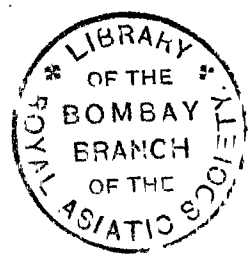
1898

106939

BY

BENNET BURLEIGH

WITH PORTRAITS, NUMEROUS ILLUSTRATIONS, MAPS, AND PLAN OF BATTLE



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1898

PREFACE.

CAUSES may be constant in their operation, yet unforeseen events will oft arise to set aside judgment and plans, which is perhaps only another way of saying—"Man proposes, God disposes." By order of the British Government of the day, that enormous area in North-Eastern Africa known as the Egyptian Soudan, extending from Wady Halfa to the equator, was yielded by the Khedive to whomsoever cared to seize it. Many seaports along and beyond the Red Sea littoral were abandoned, as well as numberless tribes, Arab and negroid, their future left to be determined by the lottery of conquest. The Mahdist rising was in full swing at that period in the Central Soudan. Fanatical millions eagerly volunteered to extend by fire and sword the dominion of their new creed, as they hoped, to the uttermost ends of the earth.

Within a decade almost, the policy that dictated the evacuation and abandonment of that country had been reversed and the re-conquest of the Soudan begun. It is of the more recent carrying out, under British direction and aid, of the task, that I have now written. Although I might have had something new to say

about the Dongola campaign of 1896, I confine my narrative mainly to the more important incidents that occurred in 1897–8. Indeed, the real forward movement only commenced with the capture of Abu Hamed. The brilliant campaign conducted by the Sirdar during the spring of this year, which closed in the victory of the Atbara, has virtually carried our arms up to Khartoum and before the walls of Omdurman. We have but to wait for high Nile to regain the absolute command of the river. Even the date and nature of the final struggle before the last stronghold of Mahdism may, with fair accuracy, be forecast.

I have been an eye-witness during the course of all the campaigns in the Soudan in which British troops have been employed, acting as war correspondent for the *Daily Telegraph*, London. Naturally, much of which appears in the following pages first saw light in the columns of that journal, but by no means all. Still, the scenes described and their character are of such a nature, that I venture to hope there is ample justification for spreading the record in this more convenient form.

I have to thank Mr Ross, of *Black and White*, and Colonel Frank Rhodes, for the use of photographs; the Proprietors of the *Daily Telegraph*, for the use of maps and copy; and others, for their kind assistance.

BENNET BURLEIGH.

LONDON, *July* 1898.

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SIRDAR AND KHALIFA.

CHAPTER I.

Introductory.—The Situation.

It remained for the latter part of the nineteenth century to see orderly government, and the extension of civilisation under European control, into that vast territory known as the Egyptian Soudan, suddenly destroyed, and the land voluntarily given over to barbarism. How horrible rule by savagery is, few readers can imagine. Broadly stated, it means human association where slavery, cruelty, and vice are the normal condition, and where property and life are at the instant disposal of passion and the sword. In that period not only were men, women, and children ruthlessly slain, but rich provinces were devastated and turned into barren places. How great the extent of the calamity has been may in a measure be gauged by the authoritative assertion of Slatin Pasha, that by warfare, famine, and disease, the population of the Egyptian Soudan has, under the dervishes, been reduced by seventy-five per cent.

Mahomed Achmed, the Dongowali, who, copying many an impostor before him, called himself the "Mahdi," did not long outlive General Gordon. In June of the same year, 1885, that Gordon gave his life to save the Soudan, Mahomed Achmed died of virulent smallpox, and was buried in the apartment in which he expired, in his new capital of Omdurman, opposite Khartoum. As early as 1883 his right-hand supporter, trusty ally, fanatic and companion, Abdullah the Taaishi, a chief of the Baggara Arabs, brave, wily and unscrupulous beyond his master, had obtained the distinction from Mahomed Achmed of being nominated as his chief Khalifa and successor. Brief as was the course run by Mahomed Achmed (he was but 37 years of age at his death), it was yet long enough to bring disillusion to many of his adherents, as to the genuineness of his claim to be the true Mahdi. Like the so-called Mahdi, Abdullah and the other dervish chiefs bore themselves decently at first, but success in warfare soon led to their relaxing all moral restraints, and becoming debauchees of the worst type. Khalifa Abdullah, though but 54 years of age, is already an old man. In the earlier years of his life of pleasure in Omdurman, the strong, medium-sized, active Abdullah grew lazy and inordinately fat. Quite recently, however, possibly owing to the increasing cares of his situation, he has become thin, grey-haired, and feeble-looking in body. So say fugitives from Omdurman and prisoners taken in battle. After the death of Mahomed Achmed, the high flood of the new converts' frenzy began to abate. They no doubt recalled that the Mahdi had

proclaimed it was God's decree that death should not come to him until he had made the world Moslem, and set his feet in Constantinople and Mecca. Khalifa Abdullah, by all the arts and contrivances calculated to excite the credulity, fears, and desires of a superstitious, ignorant people, resorting with equal readiness to cajolery, fraud, torture, and murder, managed, notwithstanding the decline of fanatical Mahdism, to improve his position and firmly establish his khalifate. He to a great extent replaced the mad fury of the early dervishes by the introduction of military organisation among the wild tribes, endeavouring, though in a crude way, to adopt the system of training and tactics employed in the Egyptian army. Of late he has succeeded in so far modifying the original tribal system of conducting warfare, that his infantry, cavalry, and artillery are ordered and commanded much in the European fashion. The emirs and lesser leaders nowadays wear distinctive insignia showing their rank; and, more wonderful still, the restless Baggara cavalry have been dragooned, and made to drill and work by squadrons. It is, however, in the handling of military supplies and keeping the accounts of stores that the Mahdists have apparently not only sensibly copied, but bettered, the instruction of the Khedival commissariat department. Some of the dervish accounts, probably kept by Coptic clerks, which fell into my hands at Hafir, Dongola, and elsewhere, showed that, down to the uttermost pound of beans or packet of small-arms ammunition, nothing was issued without a written warrant, and that receipts for everything were

taken, and the stores on hand could be ascertained at a glance. I know of no other matter connected with dervish affairs in which their accuracy and exactitude can be relied upon.

I do not wish to be understood as asserting that there is no longer a remnant of fervent dervishes left.

> "Faith, fanatic faith, once wedded fast
> To some dear error, hugs it to the last;"

and there are Mahdists yet of that type, whom Khalifa Abdullah well knows how to make use of. The brave and capable emir, Wad en Nejumi, was a man of that character. By the sincerity of his belief, he dominated his followers and won renown among the dervishes as a martyr for his creed on the battlefield of Toski in 1889. Warned in time, however, Abdullah has long recognised that adherents of the Nejumi stamp are a rapidly vanishing quantity and force. The common people, imitating their leaders, have grown careless and indifferent about Mahdism; and other than religious means, as already indicated, are taken by the Khalifa to build up temporal authority upon the ruins of his spiritual sovereignty. Rivals and enemies were disposed of by the usual methods employed by oriental despots. To entrench himself in his position as ruler, he has surrounded himself by relatives, bestowing upon them wealth and power. Even his tribesmen—particularly the Taaisha—constrained to migrate from afar into Omdurman, have been petted and favoured in endless ways, and set over all the other inhabitants. The least sign of defection on the part of other septs

is punished with death, as in the case of the Jaalin, who sought to withdraw from Mahdism and were recently slaughtered without mercy in Metemneh. Cunningly of late, continuing to profess adherence to Mahdism, plus the prophet Mahomet Abdullah has "revelations" when it suits his purpose to change any existing order of things. By that means he has had the hardihood to depart from Moslem teaching, and to designate his son and lineage as the heaven-chosen successors in the Khalifate, in the event of his death. The son who has been made "Commander of the Forces" is a worthless young man, sodden with excesses, but neither he nor his father will much longer be permitted to blight the Soudan.

Turn we to Egypt, where the forces are being mustered for dealing the death-blow to Mahdism and the Khalifa's cherished aspirations about founding an empire. His chiefest encouragement has been that in the past, though the English arm has been often uplifted against him, it has always been arrested short of striking a fatal stroke. Happily, of late years Egypt has been blest with two "strong" men. Quite possibly the majority of her people look askance at the presence of either within the borders of their land. I allude to Lord Cromer and the Sirdar, Sir Herbert Kitchener. Each has the qualities of distinction—sound judgment, resolution, and genius in execution. With mind and eye bent on carrying out the policy of England in Egypt, Lord Cromer has held steadfastly on his set course. He has been serenely indifferent, for a diplomatist, to the babble and the petty trickeries of

Eastern political huckstering. Alert, but aloof, he has pursued his vocation as Britain's representative, bettering instruction, turning counsel into law. On Lord Cromer's arrival in the country, when he was known as Sir Evelyn Baring, a wag wrote the following lines:—

"That patience's a virtue is very well known,
But I think, when it's put to the touch
In Egypt, they'll say, with a groan,
There's an *Evil in Bearing* too much."

True, to-day, as then, so far as the incompetent and plundering Pashas and their myrmidons are concerned.

Sir Herbert Kitchener, an enthusiast in arms, resourceful and daring, unites in himself the skill and subtleties of the sapper with the dash of a trooper. It was at Debbeh, ninety miles south of Dongola, in 1884, that I first learned to know him well. He was then living with the Mudir Mustapha's Yawer's irregulars. Wearing the dress of an Arab, he was scarcely distinguishable from a native. He had gone in advance of the British forces on a delicate and dangerous mission, for which he had volunteered. I had wandered, unauthorised, to Debbeh, attended by one servant, in search of news and adventure, and easily found both. On the upward trip I had passed a risky night in the Mahdi's ancestral home with his uncle and nephews, and had ridden among bands of fierce Kabbabish. To my astonishment and delight I found one Englishman within the mud walls of Debbeh—Captain Kitchener, R.E., for such he then was. He gave me a hearty welcome, and added to my debt of gratitude by producing

two bottles of claret, his whole store, which we most loyally drank at dinner. For weeks he had not heard the English tongue spoken, and he naturally was glad to see a countryman able to tell him something of what was happening outside the Soudan. Years have rolled by since; and although he is relatively still a young man, the hot desert sun and African campaigning have done for him what they have wrought upon many who are his juniors—they have streaked his hair with grey. But to-day, as then, his tall, sinewy form is unbent, he is as active as ever, observant, and of a somewhat silent disposition. In manner he is good-natured, a listener rather than a talker, but readily pronouncing an opinion if it is called for. All his life he has been *par excellence* "a volunteer" soldier,—volunteering, time and again, for one difficult and dangerous duty after another. There is on record a vigorous prior judgment of Captain Kitchener on an early Soudan campaign, which subsequent events have accentuated and borne out.

Without special aptitude, occasion is of little value. Sir Herbert was happy in both. He rose rapidly in the estimation of the authorities, and was advanced in rank. But a few years ago he seemed far removed from any chance of succession to the Sirdar's post, for many other officers, his seniors, were apparently fixed between him and that dignity. His excellence as a soldier and an administrator were recognised by relatively a handful of friends at that period. It was as Governor of Suakim, in the Eastern Soudan, in 1886, that Sir Herbert Kitchener obtained his first real

opportunity of showing the manner of man he was. He accurately gauged the various so-called "friendlies," relegating them to their proper places. One supposed terrible fellow on the war-path, a Fadlab or Amarar, whom he quickly found out, he dubbed "Sheik of the Tongue." Subsidies were readjusted, and, for the first time, a return was got for money invested, whilst Osman Digna and his crew were kept, by dint of blows, from the gates of Suakim. His experiences upon the Red Sea littoral, political and warlike, have doubtless stood him many a service since. The vastness of the Soudan and its general barrenness multiply to an incredible degree the difficulties of transport. That foremost difficulty, together with the wondrous mobility of the Mahdist forces and the courage of the dervishes in action, must have been pondered over by Sir Herbert many a time. At a very early stage in his experiences of desert warfare, he formed the opinion that former methods for the suppression of Mahdism, the slaveholders' rebellion, and the pacification of the Soudan, were defective in several respects. The conditions, too, had somewhat altered since the days of the earlier expeditions sent from England and India. No substantial gain accrued to Egypt or Britain from any of those costly enterprises, so far as independent observation can discover, unless prestige in arms is accounted such. At great sacrifice of blood and treasure, British troops were rushed into the Soudan, brilliant battles were fought, and splendid victories were won, and when the fruit was within their grasp, the soldiers were hurried out

of the country. Making war on such lines is futile, if it does not call for a harsher term. But the exigencies of home politics proved to be of more weight than pledged compacts with friendly natives, or the conservation of soldiers' triumphs and lives. I will add that, indeed, the policy of winning victories of which no further use was made, was hurtful to peace, and destructive of native confidence in our arms and aims. Sirdar Kitchener, looking narrowly to Egyptian interests, with no overflowing treasury, and but limited means to draw upon, conceived the idea that the Soudan could be won back. His plan was to pursue the methods of a Roman conquest, to make roads and advance by regular stages to his goal. He looked for little extraneous aid, nor deemed a big British expedition necessary in the preliminary stages. Hampered by the limited available resources of Egypt, he yet saw no reason to doubt that, stage by stage, it might be year by year, he would win his way to Omdurman and up to the old boundaries of the Egyptian Soudan. The Egyptian army would probably have to be again increased by a few thousand men. That was a matter which could wait, and would be put right later. It has been increased until, one way and another, the Khedival forces now number close on 30,000 men. As for Khalifa Abdullah, he cannot retreat from Omdurman without fighting, unless he altogether abandons his pretensions to human and spiritual supremacy in the Soudan. For him and those united to his interests flight is impossible, at least before they face a general action.

Abdullah's wild followers, and the now jealous and suspicious tribesmen, other than his own folk, the Baggara, would tear him to pieces if he showed fear or signs of bolting. A final decisive battle will have to be fought; but, meanwhile, the steady advance of the Khedival forces has loosened the grip of the Khalifa over many of those now under his standard. As the Sirdar moves steadily onward, so will his forces increase in strength, whilst the Mahdist levies decline.

It has been ever so: the great Soudan revolt, begotten of fanaticism and lust, has all but run its course. The Carlylean maxim is justified. A government of cut-throats and ruffians must soon destroy itself. Without precipitation, and by an economic administration of affairs unparalleled in modern wars, Sirdar Kitchener has conducted, and continues to conduct, this Soudan campaign. During a period of six months, although there had been 20,000 men to provide for, not more than £400,000 extra was spent for their maintenance in the field. Equally unparalleled, most of that amount had not been destructively spent, for a considerable portion was devoted to railroad-making, erection of buildings, and construction of vessels, all of which can be rightly classed as productive investments. Indeed, revenue which has helped to carry forward the war has been derived from these already. Many of the wise economies referred to are due to the fact that English officers in the Egyptian army are familiar with native markets and the prices of commodities, and payments are not made, as formerly was the case when British

expeditions went out,—"through the nose" for everything.

Had there been no battles to record in 1896, the arduous struggle to carry the railway from Sarras to Kosheh, a distance of 76 miles, in four months, would, of itself, have deserved several chapters in the annals of any campaign. Against, possibly, the worst obstacles nature could interpose, the line was rapidly laid. The Sirdar is fortunate in having under him a most competent and industrious body of British and native officers. But for their devotion and energy the construction of the railway and the provisioning of the troops could not have gone on simultaneously as they did. Getting forward supplies and munition of war for 20,000 men is no light matter, and the problem becomes perplexing when material for laying seventy-six miles of single-line railway has to be sent on as well. Great as were the achievements of the Sirdar in railroad construction, movement of materials and supplies, as well as of men, over long lines of communication in 1896, he has surpassed them during the last two years, 1897–1898. In no campaign in any country has work of a magnitude to compare with the Sirdar's new line from Wady Halfa across the desert to Berber and the Atbara ever been attempted. The inception of such a line was more than bold—it was daring; whilst the execution of the work has been signalised by the display of the highest skill in overcoming difficulties, and boundless energy has been exercised in the completion of the iron way in so brief a space of time. I am aware that this is not mincing

words, but the facts, I think, call for no less. The solution of the transport difficulty meant the certain and relatively easy reconquest of the Soudan, and Sir Herbert Kitchener addressed himself with courage to the task. Despite the money temporarily sunk in the Halfa-Kosheh-Dongolo riverian railway route he determined to discard it, as too long, and too costly to complete, for the ultimate purpose he had in view. It was good enough as a means to regain the Dongola province, but to strike direct from Wady Halfa for Abu Hamed, and the clearer upper reaches of the Nile, was better. A running survey proved what was unsuspected by all but himself, namely, that a comparatively easy route to lay rails upon, existed in the Halfa-Abu-Hamed desert. The total absence of water on that stretch of 232 miles from Nile to Nile seemed an insuperable objection, but not to the Sirdar. With undaunted resolution, a vote of money was procured —but little more than it would take to promote an English railway bill in Parliament—materials were bought, and the line was begun and carried successfully through. Further on, I shall have more to say about the wonderful Halfa-Atbara railway, which has brought Berber within twelve days' steaming from London, or five days from Cairo.

CHAPTER II.

RETROSPECTIVE—1896–7.

To plunge into the middle of one's subject is not always best nor is it easy for everybody to do. I find that to give a more correct impression of the events leading to the reconquest of the Egyptian Soudan, I must touch upon earlier incidents, and dwell further upon what took place in 1896–7. In this I have no ulterior purpose to serve, but solely the presentation of facts bearing upon the main issue of my narrative. When the Dongola 1896 expedition was ordered, I ventured to point out in the columns of the *Daily Telegraph* that merely to seize and hold the town of that name would be a futile task. In the first place, I contended that it would be unwise to go beyond the secure Halfa-Sarras frontier, unless the new line was carried up to Abu Hamed. To proceed no further than Dongola meant, I contended, quitting a safe frontier for a dangerous one: and merely to go no farther than El Ordeh, otherwise New Dongola, involved that the province in question would be harassed by raiders, and would not repay its keeping. Once a move beyond Sarras was made, Merawi, I urged, would have to be held. Many military critics professed to believe

differently. The careful advance south once begun, the Sirdar soon won fresh laurels by his intrepid conduct of affairs. By a daring night march, the dervishes at Firket were surprised, and briskly defeated. The action was fought with the full knowledge and approval beforehand of Lord Cromer, who, truth to tell, wisely counselled the Sirdar to make all reasonable haste and test the value of this Egyptian army. Happily, fellaheen and blacks answered the call splendidly; and the "blooding"—the first in several years—they had got through successfully against the dervishes, stiffened, what is sometimes called the *morale* of the whole Khedival force. Through floods, storms, railroad breakdowns, and a serious visitation of cholera, the resourceful Sirdar pulled his army, English and native, and in due course, twice thereafter routed the dervishes, turning them out of the province of Dongola, and establishing a new frontier as far up the Nile as Merawi and Abu Dis.

Since Tel-el-Kebir, in 1882, and the Dervish rising which occurred a little later, there have been half-a-dozen or so abortive attempts on England's part to carry out the dictum of the late General Gordon to "smash Mahdism." There is no need to recapitulate the number of the expeditions sent, and the failure of all to do more than scotch the snake whose slimy trail lies all over the Soudan, marked by the desolation of ruined villages and fields, and the whitened bones of countless human beings. Undiluted Mahdism was latter-day militant Mohammedanism, whose self-appointed mission was to convert the world, without

halting, to its crass beliefs, and to destroy all unbelievers, root and branch. Its instincts are ferocious, and its methods relentless. From the beginning, Mahdism, as a social movement, has only shown potency for destruction and mischief. Its capacity for evil has only been limited by its relative feebleness. Still, there was, in the zenith of its power, always the risk that, with successful dervish raids made north of Wady Halfa, the infection of fanaticism might spread to the confines of Lower Egypt, if not to Cairo itself.

For these and other reasons most of the former expeditions against Mahdism were solely justified as in the nature of preventives and temporary remedies. The 1896 campaign stood in a different category. In March of that year, the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Mr Curzon, speaking in the House of Commons, said, substantially, that in view of the reported forward movements in various directions of the dervishes, the threatened beleaguerment of Kassala, the Government, acting in conjunction with the Government of Egypt and their advisers, and in order to avoid danger to Italy, to Egypt, to Britain, and in the interests of Europe, had ordered an advance upon Akasheh. Mr Curzon furthermore stated that the advance might ultimately be extended to Dongola, which was one of the granaries of the Nile basin. The future action of the Government was to be "regulated by considerations not merely military and strategical, but political and financial," a four-barred fence often difficult to surmount. Even before this Ministerial utterance the forward movement of the

1896 campaign had begun. It is strange, and merits comment, that, so far from the Khedive and his Government having been consulted in the matter, as indicated by Mr Curzon, that ruler was in absolute ignorance of what had taken place until informed from other than official sources. One of his constant grievances, rightly or wrongly, is that affairs most intimately connected with his kingdom are settled out of hand, without his ever being consulted. There is the highest authority for stating such was the case in the matter of the last Nile campaign.

Notwithstanding the common opinion that the expedition was undertaken to assist the Italians in their plight, the genesis of the "advance" dates before the fatal field of Adowa, on February 29, 1896. It may be granted, however, that General Baratieri's disastrous rout had something to do in precipitating events. For over a year it had been a matter of notoriety in army circles that a "campaign up the Nile" was impending, if not in preparation, and that events would be made to fit in with the fixed date of its opening, namely, the autumn of the year in question. Distinguished officers had the honour of getting their names privily set down, to be ordered for instant service whenever hostilities broke out. On a former occasion a distinguished general had actually wired home to a military colleague: "If you have any pals who want a job, now is your chance; send them along." The "Nile campaign for 1896" assuredly was regarded in army circles as a fixture. I will not say that it was any the less unwise or unnecessary on that account. The

folly lay from the beginning, as has been pointed out, in trying to persuade people that anything short of "smashing the Mahdi" was worth undertaking, or moving a step beyond Wady Halfa to do.

With the opening of the 1897 campaign, sure ground is reached concerning the reconquest of the Egyptian Soudan, supported by British money and arms. Either circumstances had forced our Government's hands over the Dongola acquisition, or events had arisen to compel a further Ministerial statement. Speaking upon a money vote of £798,802 in aid, and as usual, with plainness, from his place in the House of Commons as Chancellor of the Exchequer, on the 5th February 1897, Sir M. Hicks Beach said: "Since the Dongola expedition was undertaken, we have never concealed, either from Parliament or from the country, that in our view there should be a further advance in the same direction, and that Egypt could never be held to be permanently secured as long as a hostile power was in occupation of the Nile valley up to Khartoum. . . . Has philanthropy no claims upon us in this matter? I do not wish to underrate any of our responsibilities, let us say, for the Armenians, or for any of the subjects of the Sultan of Turkey. But these responsibilities are not nearly so great or so special as our responsibility for the inhabitants of the Soudan. This country solely, deliberately, and, I think, unwittingly, compelled the Egyptian Government to abandon the Soudan. Our people were told at the time by Mr Gladstone and others, who, I have no doubt, believed it, that it was a

right and proper thing to relieve the inhabitants of the Soudan, who were rightly struggling to be free from the tyranny of the Egyptian Government. But what do we see now? From the reports of those who have been so unfortunate as to be prisoners of the Khalifa; from the condition to which the once fertile province of Dongola has been reduced under that Government; from the delight of the population at welcoming back that Egyptian Government who were supposed to appear to them in the light of tyrants, we may be quite sure that there never was a case in any part of the world in which an unfortunate and helpless population groaned under a more ruthless, more barbarous, and more fanatical tyranny than the peaceful inhabitants of the Soudan under the rule of the Khalifa. Is it because the skins of these men are black, is it because the religion is Mahomedan that the claims of humanity, which were so strong with the right hon. member for Montrose in the matter of Armenia, are nothing to us now? I will not believe it. I am no advocate, I am no believer in the mission, even of so powerful a country as this, to redress the wrongs of humanity all over the world. But here is a case in which the task is ready to our hand. Here is a case in which, as the right hon. gentleman himself has said, there is reason to believe that this baleful power of the Khalifa is of itself crumbling to decay. Here is a case in which we may fulfil that responsibility which undoubtedly rests upon us. I believe the great majority of our people will desire that that task should be undertaken, and that responsibility fulfilled."

CHAPTER III.

Capture of Abu Hamed and Berber.

Statesmen are wont to make a merit of dissembling, even in matters patent to most people. Like coy dominoes, they prefer to have their masks removed by other hands than their own. The success of the Dongola expedition put heart of grace in others besides the Egyptian soldiery. Two things were settled by it in a satisfactory fashion: first, the Khedival troops could be depended upon in action; second, that Mahdism was on the wane, and the local population everywhere unmistakably friendly. Few surely believed the industriously circulated report that the Abyssinians, the traditional enemies of fanatical Moslem, were about to make common cause with the dervishes against the Italians or ourselves. The Abyssinians may fight for their own hands, but, unless they are sadly tricked, are not likely to fight anybody else's battles.

Campaigning in the Soudan has nothing about it at any season of the year in the nature of an excursion or a picnic. Therefore it is ordinarily at late high Nile, when the genial north wind returns with the autumnal months, that military movements

recommence and expeditions set out. A variety of events precipitated matters in 1897, and it soon became worse than useless, for reasons of policy or statecraft, to longer conceal from the left hand what the right was doing. The pacification of the province of Dongola was complete. Neighbouring Arab tribes openly renounced the Khalifa and all his works, whilst others like the Jaalin, although their country was occupied by the dervishes, were notoriously but awaiting a favourable opportunity to return to their allegiance to the Khedive. Khalifa Abdullah suspected them of intriguing against him, and charged them with driving their oxen and sheep across the Bayuda desert and selling them to feed "the enemies of God." To put a stop to their trafficking, and otherwise deal with them so that they should no longer be a menace to him, Emir of emirs Mahmoud—nephew, he claims to be, of the Khalifa—was despatched with a force of Baggara and blacks from Omdurman to Metemneh. Now, in the spring of 1897, Metemneh was held by the Jaalin chief, Wad Sahr, who had a force several thousand strong, composed mostly of his tribesmen. Wad Sahr and his men had been in communication with the Sirdar, and had decided to boldly break away from Mahdism, having become disgusted with its pretensions, and hating the licentiousness of its chiefs. In the Soudan the Jaalin are distinguished as a religious and moral people. Remington rifles and ammunition, issued by the Egyptian Government, were on their way across the desert for the Jaalin when Mahmoud arrived. Under the Khalifa's instructions, Mahmoud

ordered the whole of the Jaalin to emigrate from the west to the east or right bank of the Nile. They refused to obey, or to quit their lands and homes. Instead of temporising, Wad Sahr and his followers rose in armed rebellion against the dervishes. Although the Khalifa never puts rifles in the hands of any but his trustiest troops and followers, and even then often retains the arms under guard, lock and key, until occasion arises, the Jaalin having but few guns, their weapons being swords and spears, were placed at a signal disadvantage. They fought bravely enough, but were no match for Mahmoud and his relatively well-armed Baggara and black riflemen. Over two thousand Jaalin were slain. Mahmoud subsequently swept the country bare around Metemneh, killing all the men he could lay his hands upon, as well as numbers of women and children. Young girls were, however, saved alive and held as slaves, or sent into the harems at Omdurman and elsewhere. As for such of the Jaalin as escaped massacre or captivity, they reaffirmed their adhesion to the Egyptian Government. Subsequently they received firearms, and were helped by a small subsidy, and so became most active and friendly allies. One of the first acts of the tribe was to seize and hold Gakdool Wells, an important position more than half-way across the Bayuda desert, on the direct Korti- or Merawi-Metemneh route. Major-General Sir Herbert Stewart's grave and that of others who died in the Gordon relief expedition is at Gakdool. The capture of the wells and driving off the enemy from the neighbourhood was of great service, for it

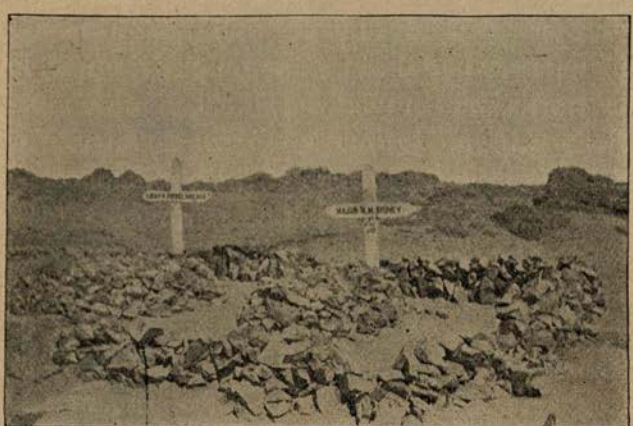
freed the Sirdar's right and the province of Dongola from risk of surprises by dervish raiders. The more immediate effect was to leave General Kitchener untrammelled at the work of passing the gunboats and other craft over the 120 miles of broken water and cataracts between Merawi and Abu Hamed, and liberty to move forward in that latter direction whenever he felt disposed. Besides having to deal with the Jaalin so that they should vex the Khalifa no more, another instruction of Emir Mahmoud's was to block the Bayuda desert roads, so that as in 1884–5 these routes should not be open to the march of British or Egyptian troops moving across to Metemneh or Omdurman. Mahmoud in 1897 was about thirty years of age, known as a lax rather than an austere and fanatical dervish. He won his spurs, so to speak, and became famous among his own people as a hard fighter in expeditions into Darfur and the South-West.

The defeat of the Italians by the Abyssinians at Adowa, and the determination of the Rudini Ministry to withdraw their garrison from Kassala by Christmas 1897, that being the final date to which, out of compliance with the British Government's request, they would occupy the post, and the reports that other powers were preparing to occupy the Upper Nile lands, quickened England's action. Long before the wonderful Abu Hamed desert railway had been laid to a point where possible dervish raids might have to be reckoned with, preparations were secretly begun by the Sirdar for capturing that important

frontier station of the enemy. Its possession would mean added security along the whole of the Nile downward, and the recovery of the use of the long closed short-cut route to Egypt, *via* Abu Hamed and the Korosko desert. Almost needless to say, as usual, the Sirdar was well beforehand with all his plans for the movement of troops and the instant rushing forward of supplies from Korosko and other places, the moment that Abu Hamed should be seized. The subsidised and loyal Abadah chiefs and tribesmen were most anxious to regain full control of the Korosko route, their immemorial birthright. One of their bravest and best leaders, Abdul Azim, had scouted up to the walls of Abu Hamed, and knew much of the strength and stations of the dervish forces holding the place. All the local tribes were well disposed towards an Egyptian re-occupation. Major-General A. Hunter, D.S.O., who is next in command to the Sirdar, started on the 29th of July with a small force, less than two brigades of all arms, from beyond Merawi, to capture Abu Hamed. The Abadah chiefs were prepared to co-operate in the enterprise. Marching swiftly for several days in succession, after a night's tramp of 18 miles he appeared at daybreak on the 7th August upon the bare desert knolls and rocky hillocks within 1000 yards of the dervish lines at Abu Hamed. The centre of the enemy's position was the "dem," a rectangular stout mud-walled inclosure, covering six or seven acres, containing the Mahdist military stores, wells, and rude quarters for horse and foot. With some skill the village mud-huts

were connected by specially built walls, and these, as well as the houses and the dem itself, were loopholed for musketry. Major-General Hunter had made his dispositions for attack ere reaching the ground, so at 5.30 a.m., without halting his troops, he moved close in to engage the enemy. The Khedival soldiers were extended in line with strong supports. On his right General Hunter placed the 11th Soudanese battalion, next and partly in support the 3rd Egyptian battalion, and then in order the 9th and 10th Soudanese battalions. His cavalry and camelry were upon his left, and a horse battery of small Krupps and several Maxims were placed upon the left of the 11th battalion. Besides local natives, the dervish force included 150 Baggara horsemen, and 500 riflemen. After a brief cannonade, General Hunter's troops advanced to the assault. Although taken by surprise, the dervishes pluckily rallied, and sent out skirmishers to occupy the rocks and rough ground upon their front and flanks. These the Egyptian troops soon got rid of, killing most of them upon the ground they clung to. The enemy in the dem and huts fought with equal stubbornness. Withholding their rifle-fire until the Khedival assaulting lines came within 300 yards range, on crossing the nearest crest, the dervishes tore their ranks with a furious fusilade. Officers leading their men were struck down, but without halting, the troops rushed onward, and in a series of wild rushes, rallies, and hand-to-hand encounters, took the dem, and from house to house and hut to hut, shot, bayonetted, and cleared the stronghold of the dervishes. Few of the

garrison, other than the mounted Baggara, escaped alive. Those who got away had either to run the gauntlet of a murderous fire and hot pursuit as they streamed south along the river's bank, or, still under fire, risk swimming the broad Nile, then in flood. As the Abadah Arabs had old scores to settle, the chase was not slack. The Egyptian loss was relatively heavy, the total, being 27 killed and 61 wounded, in-



GRAVES OF MAJOR SIDNEY AND CAPTAIN FITZCLARENCE, ABU HAMED.

cluding, besides native, two British officers killed—Major H. M. Sidney and Captain E. F. Fitzclarence. Not more than twenty per cent. of the dervishes got away. Their leader Mohammed Zain was among the prisoners taken.

The sequel showed that the dervishes had received a severe lesson at Abu Hamed. As for the fugitives, most of them continued their retreat to Omdurman. Their chief emirs having been killed or captured, the

latter the worst fate in the fanatics' judgment, the dervishes in the province of Berber were an unorganised rabble. The population were hostile to them, and on the 31st of August disaffection had so spread that friendly Arabs seized the town of Berber and held it for the Sirdar. On the 6th of September, Major-General Hunter, having marched south, occupied Berber. Before the war it was a large and prosperous town, a centre of industry and trade, but it had been sacked and ruined, and a new, dirty dervish Berber had been built on a site several miles to the north, and two from the Nile. From Abu Hamed south, and more especially from Berber, under ordinary circumstances, the broad Nile is navigable for light-draught steamers or other craft the year round. By sheer dogged will and vast expenditure of well-organised energy, the Sirdar had successfully passed six of his gunboats over the Cataracts. These vessels included three of the smaller and older and three of the larger 1896 class—the *Nazir*, *Zafir*, and *Fatah*. They had been lightened for the upward voyage, but by the beginning of September they had been re-equipped, and were ready at Abu Hamed, with their 12-pounders, 6-pounder quick-firers, and Maxims, to support General Hunter. Indeed, four of the gunboats assisted in his advance and occupation of Berber. An easy, clear water-way, and a choice of two good marching routes for troops, by either bank of the Nile, upon Omdurman, was at last in the Sirdar's hands. Matters were greatly simplified—the future readily, safely calculable. The main thing was to

retain possession of the advanced positions so fortunately won; so troops were hurried up from Merawi and other parts of the Dongola province. On their arrival Major-General Hunter moved onward 40 miles further, seized the strategic line of the Atbara, and subsequently scouted up that occasional river as far as Aderamat. Another clear gain accrued from that operation. An alternative and still better route to the sea—our true base—was opened, and cleared of the enemy; to wit, the Suakim-Berber caravan roads. The whole situation was absolutely assured. At high Nile, when there is always ample space for handling the gunboats, these craft are impregnable defences against the dervishes. The enemy fairly recognise that fact, and stand more or less in awe of them. Each gunboat upon the river is worth the help of a brigade of infantry, and has the no small advantage of being much more mobile, so far as maintaining the line of communications is concerned. After reaching Abu Hamed, it did not take many days ere the gunboats proved anew that they were a source of constant worry, danger, and loss to the dervishes. They were continually coming and going, patrolling and attacking the enemy. They cruised away up to and past Shendy and Metemneh, capturing native craft laden with grain and stores for Mahdist garrisons; knocking the dervish forts and camps about; "hitting heads" whenever they got a chance; and procuring valuable information from within the Mahdist lines. What with the gunboats and the occupation of the Atbara lines, Osman Digna,

alarmed, retired altogether from the Eastern Soudan, and left the Hadendowa tribes in peace to throw away the last shreds of Mahdism, and return to their former allegiance to the Khedive.

Such was the position of affairs when I returned to Egypt in 1897, so as to be upon the scene in case the sudden break-up of the Khalifa's power should necessitate a race for Khartoum by the Sirdar and his army. Although the reconquest of Berber province was as the throwing down of barriers or flood-gates, carrying back trade and commerce to old channels, and opening up to the natives more peaceful pursuits than propaganda by the sword, still the Khalifa managed to maintain himself in Omdurman. Less than 201 miles away from the small Egyptian garrison, entrenched at the junction of the Atbara and the Nile, he continued to hold sway. It was by that time known that a new danger threatened Abdullah, for Kassala, about 311 miles east of Khartoum, was to be occupied by Khedival troops. I betook myself to Suakim, where I had seen several campaigns, in order to proceed to Kassala. With the Khedival flag flying once more over Berber, all along the Red Sea littoral it was quickly recognised that the fourteen years' long night of savage horror had passed. Imports and exports at Suakim went up with a bound, and merchant steamers began to churn the waters of the narrow inlet. The commercial barometer is usually the most reliable of indexes of the security of a country. Greek and Arab traders, holding that Mahdism was done for, began sending

their goods into the interior, and selling freely to the natives. From remote khors and fastnesses, gums, skins, senna, and other Soudan commodities began to arrive in considerable quantities. As early as the 18th of September 1897 leading Suakim merchants addressed formal written petitions to the local gubernatorial authorities asking permission to forward camel caravans with goods. They expressed their readiness to despatch them to Berber, entirely at their own risk, a distance of about 250 miles. Permits, however, were not issued until the beginning of October, whereupon caravans, accompanied by Europeans, set out almost daily with merchandise, chiefly groceries and cloths.

Natives, however, had travelled over the road from the beginning of September. The first European who actually made the journey from the time of the closing of the Suakim-Berber route, in 1883, was Captain Sparkes, of the 4th Egyptian battalion. Leaving the coast with a small mounted escort, he arrived in Berber on the 25th of October. An arrangement has since been come to by which the native sheiks police the road, receiving in return a fixed charge on every animal watered at the wells. "European" Suakim is situated on a little round coral islet, half a mile in diameter. It is, however, connected with the African mainland by a broad causeway, about 200 yards in length. The place has lately blossomed into the dignity of a town. To keep the shallow waters of the embayed harbour sweet, free course for the currents is provided by something that is neither a

bridge nor a culvert, but 'twixt the two. Most of the former native population has been shifted outside of Suakim proper to El Geff, which is across the causeway, upon the mainland. In addition to those, there are in El Geff thousands of Arabs dwelling in huts and Bedouin tents, to the north-west and south of the town. These ample suburbs of Suakim are widely scattered, and are characteristically ragged. Many of the natives have dug wells, and attempted the cultivation of remarkably small patches of grain, cotton, and vegetables. The regular Suakimese husbandmen, who till some hundred acres or two near the old Gemaizeh Wells, had their third course of crops well advanced last October. Their dhurra was in the ear, and their beans and sugar-cane were ripe. Tomatoes, cucumbers, and melons also were in their prime. But it is only a question of procuring water to have fresh vegetables all the year round. The Arab appreciates "green food," and he and his black slaves—men and women—still more appreciate the Englishman's willingness to buy and pay for garden produce. There is plenty of excellent water only a few miles off in the hills, but Suakim is still supplied by indifferent well-water, pumped from outside El Geff, near Gemaizeh fort. For drinking purposes, Europeans use condensed sea-water manufactured upon Quarantine Island. Ships have to pay the exorbitant price of 10s. 3d. a ton for it when loading their tanks.

I spent some mornings watching the Egyptian battalions, the 4th and 6th, who were there at that date, at drill. The "Gippies," rank and file, so far as

"make-up for a soldier goes," leave apparently nothing to be wished for. Patient, prompt, obedient, they are full of all the negative qualities requisite for first-class fighting material. Whether they possess the positive qualities—I won't call them virtues—that ensure victory in battle, is quite another affair. Anyhow the men were all uncommonly well drilled, and looked remarkably fit. They even shot well, and went through field evolutions with some show of spirit. What a pity it was, I thought, that the Turkish words of command were still employed on the parade-ground and in the field. Neither the officers nor the men know the language. The traditions of pleasing the Porte by maintaining them in use might safely be discarded nowadays. It would be to the advantage of the Khedive's forces to have the men instructed and directed in words that appealed to their understanding. The 4th Battalion is one of the Egyptian regiments that have pipers, as well as buglers and drums to march by. It is astonishing how popular the "gran' Hielan' bagpipes," ribbons and all, are with the soldiers and the Arabs throughout the Soudan. The piper lads are, of course, natives, and don't wear the kilt or a waist-cloth, but strut and blow bravely in tarboosh, jacket, trews, putties, and high-lows, proud as pipers always are, with the drummers as good seconds. Scotch marching tunes are in request. I heard them, with might and main, giving "A hundred pipers, one and all." If anything could give the Fuzzy-Wuzzy or Hadendowa a good opinion of the Egyptian infantry—he has none for their cavalry—it is the pipers.

Army ballads, war songs, and minor Rudyard Kipling versification are indigenous and of all lands. It is only in that exquisite sense, quality, they differ. Our old foeman, that unapproachable savage fighting man, the Fuzzy-Wuzzy or Hadendowa, whom I have met in the shock of battle at El Teb, Tamai, and elsewhere, sings of the prowess of his own arms and the immortal deeds of Tommy Atkins on the afore-named and other fields. He revels and rejoices in Tommy, just as Kipling has done, as a foeman worthy of his steel. With a fine contempt for other natives, and for Greeks, Italians, French, and outside nationalities known to him, "Inglees Tommy" is his ideal man, a fellow fearless and mighty. Since 1884–5 they have in native fashion been singing Tommy's praises at their festivals. Now he is their true friend, and, in their opinion, as good as one of themselves. The "ego" is everywhere, for is not England going to be their mother one of these days as well as his?

I venture to give an easy translation of one of these Hadendowa war songs, which, like most rude ballads, has much repetition. The words are first chanted in solo form, line by line, and are then repeated as a chorus by everybody present:

Ho! true seed of Abraham,
Ye sons of the Prophet.
Blessed of Allah: Fearless and free.
Invincible in war.
We've broken the necks of the Turks,
The Egyptians are our slaves.

Worthy only of our swift steel,
Is the bold red man, the Ingleesy,
From the West, from over the sea,
They came to do battle with us.
How like unto them
The Hadendowa;
They invincible on water,
We on land.
The Red Ingleesy,
The Hadendowa.

Suckled by lions, strong as steel,
They and we fought face to face
Red Ingleesy—Hadendowa.
Glory we withstood them.
The unconquerable, the Ingleesy.
What nation is like to them?
Hadendowa and Ingleesy unconquerable,
Lightning to lightning,
All consuming.

Ya, ya, Tommy,
Blood, wounds, and battles,
Rage and rejoice in.
Ya! Great heart red men,
The mighty Ingleesy.

It had always been more or less of a mystery how the Mahdists really managed to secure such abundant and constant supplies of guns and ammunition. Part, it had been suspected, found its way from the West, a little from the North, and more from the East Coast. As the Khalifa has plenty of money, he has always had people willing to play spy for him, and run through contraband of war. Prominent persons in Cairo were suspected of giving aid and comfort to the

ruthless Mahdists. Proofs were brought home against certain individuals, both in Suakim and Lower Egypt, through a lucky capture of a prisoner made by General Hunter. It appeared, when the gunboats paid a visit to Metemneh, they were met by a warm cannonade from no less than ten small forts. One of the enemy's shells cut a feed-pipe on a steamer, but the vessels all got otherwise safely past the town, and proceeded as far as the foot of the Sixth Cataract—Shabluka. The channel there is narrow, tortuous, and rocky, and the position is far more strongly defensible than the low and open ground at Metemneh. Having reconnoitred the position around Shabluka, which the dervishes held in force with artillery, the gunboats returned to Berber. Six soldiers were wounded on the steamer. The papers found on the person of the prisoner above referred to showed who were engaged in shipping the shells and ammunition used on the occasion.

A number of arrests and further captures of persons engaged in the traitorous proceedings were smartly made, and condemnation and punishment meted to the guilty.

Suakim, Gordon dubbed, not inaptly, the "Gateway of the Soudan," and that inscription was long blazoned on the one portal opening upon the causeway of the mainland. Despite the war, flocks of cattle, oxen, sheep, and goats were plentiful in the vicinity, and camels and donkeys could be counted by the thousand. The valleys and plains of the vicinity afford moderately good pasturage, and water is abundant among the

hills. A word respecting the Suakim-Berber route, about which people, without any special training entitling them to speak with weight, have written and said much. Neither great labour nor expense would be required to build a railroad from the Nile near Berber to Suakim. I know nothing is impossible to a sapper, but I am not contemplating the necessity of constructing a costly line or a difficult one, like some of the Swiss or Highland railways. It would be a much simpler business than any of these. As for water supply, late searches have shown that there is plenty to be had for train service all along the route, by merely improving the wells or digging new ones. Among the more interesting newer residents of Suakim is Father Orhwalder, who was a companion in captivity with Slatin Pasha in the Mahdi's camp. He has a church and considerable congregation of Europeans, Copts, and Abyssinians. Tall and thin, Father Orhwalder shows traces of the weary years and trials he passed among the dervishes. An earnest, religious man, he longs for the day when, the Khalifa overthrown, he will be able to go back into Kordofan, and resume his mission work there among the Soudanese and Arabs.

From London to Egypt involves a marked change of scene and circumstances at any season of the year. English weather is always a variable commodity, but in autumn in the metropolis of the world one may count on a succession of days of murky gloom, a landscape of grime, the air a cold vapour bath. All these sharpen the contrast with Egypt's brilliant skies,

luxuriant vegetation, ripening dates hanging in huge red-golden clusters from graceful palms, and an atmosphere aglow, sympathetic to "that warm, sensible motion," life. But, alas, from Egypt into the Soudan is a change quite as uncomfortable as a return to fogs and fires. One passes from a region of pleasant warmth into a torrid zone of crackling dry air and flaming sunshine. It is as insupportable as having much too much of things good enough in themselves. I was anxious to get away from Suakim to Kassala, and wished to proceed thither, *via* Tokar, the Barka Valley, and old telegraph and postal road. My transport arrangements were satisfactorily made to take a trip no European had ventured upon for fourteen years or more, but the Sirdar declined to give the requisite permission, and no Arab would hire or sell a donkey, much less a camel, to anyone if he had a suspicion the act would displease the Sirdar. There was no other alternative, if I wished to revisit Abyssinia, and see the Egyptian troops take over Kassala, than to go by sea to Massowah, and thereafter travel through the Italian colony of Erethrea. Colonel Parsons, R.A., Governor of the Red Sea littoral, had gone to Italian Abyssinia, to settle the mode in which the transfer of authority, stores, and men was to be effected, and Christmas was drawing near.

That no obstacle was put in my path by the military authorities in starting for Kassala *via* Massowah was so much gained. As there was no steamer going in that direction for a month, I hired a sambuk, or large open native boat, to make the run, a distance of some

three hundred miles. It was a raggeddy-higgledy-piggledy craft, fitted up with what might have been the sweepings of a junk shop. Old timbers, old cotton cloth, grass ropes, frayed and worn, and much besides of the like oddments. In length it was about thirty feet, in width nearly eight feet. It had two stubby poles for masts, which had a forward rake—almost like bowsprits. The foremast alone was used, and from it was hoisted a patchwork curiosity of a lateen sail. The crew were Arabs and negroes, in number seven, and included a skipper of kinds and an aged sheik as pilot. I had with me a negro lad as servant.

CHAPTER IV.

By Sea to Massowah.—Menelek's Land, or Italy in Abyssinia.

It is an age of hurry, and the war correspondents are in the running. I took my departure from Suakim for Massowah on the morning of Saturday, November 13, when it was blowing great guns. Within the coral reefs, the driving foam from the thunderous combing breakers outside covered the calmer inshore waters, giving them the appearance of a vast field of snow. It was, however, imperative I should start, as others had got wind of my trip, and had chartered a large and substantial dhow, having a better measure of speed than my craft. The steamer *Southend*, advertised to sail that day for Jeddah and Suez, postponed her departure till the following noon, on account of the storm. We, the crew and I, had to pull towards the mouth of the harbour, as the wind from the north-east was contrary, before attempting to hoist sail. The oars and paddles were curiosities as much as the sambuk—our craft—itself. They were but broken blades and handles of drift-aways, rudely nailed and spliced to eke out length. The skipper and crew prayed loudly and devoutly as we slowly progressed

towards the open water. At last, with a general invocation to Allah, the sail was hoisted, and we dashed rapidly out, shipping several big green seas. With plenty of stones and sand ballast aboard, the sambuk was fairly steady and bore up wonderfully. The masts, beams, and frame worked gruesomely, and I really thought the whole structure would tumble to pieces, or at least that the foremast would go by the board. Yet the native timbers and iron were tougher than I thought possible; and as for the rotten gear, it held on marvellously. Within three minutes our skipper had undergone as many changes of colour as a chameleon. Resigning himself to fate and sea-sickness as thoroughly as any man could, he lay prostrate for the rest of the voyage to Massowah, labouring heavily in spirit and body. For four hours we had as rough pitching as the keenest sailor could wish for, and all hands were kept busy "baling" to keep us clear of water, as we scudded towards the south-east. There was a quarter of an hour's keen suspense once, for our sail, rent in tatters with a blast, had to be lowered and mended somehow as we rolled about in the trough of the seas. We got part of it hoisted again, and getting way on the craft, an hour later secured shelter under the lee of the first of the coral islets. There repairs were made good, but I could not persuade the pilot and crew to continue the voyage that day, so we lay moored that night. I landed and explored the place, picking up a few shells and inspecting the nests of the storks and wild sea-birds. The warm waters being dreadfully infested with sharks, I bathed cautiously

in the shallows. As for the crew, they cooked their evening meal, and when the sun was setting in the west faced Mecca-wards, like good Mussulmen, and prostrated themselves with unwonted fervour and frequency.

We had made 40 miles or so of southing, being abreast of Trinkitat, near the battlefields of El Teb. There was some abatement of the fury of the gale on Sunday morning. The old pilot, who looked so wise, dried, and mummified that I detected a likeness in him to Rameses III., finally made up his mind we might venture to quit our moorings at 8 a.m. It was lowering, cold, blustering, English Channel weather, and that in the Red Sea. The rats aboard had not left us—a good sign, sailors say—but I could have dispensed with them and their companionship during the night, for the creatures persisted in nestling close to me as I tried to wring some sleep from the weary hours. Our run that second day was mostly within the islets and coral reefs, and the crew were so far relieved of their fears that a trawl-hook, with a white rag attached, was cast out, and two big, coarse fish, weighing about 10 lb. apiece, were caught, cooked, and eaten. By the sun we were abreast of Agig, nearly 100 miles from Suakim, and running freely. Agig is now only a little Arab town, on the Egypto-Soudan littoral frontier. It was formerly a place of some considerable trade in slaves, ivory, skins, and gold. Seen from the sea, it is marked by a double or cleft mountain, similar to Dumbarton rock on the Clyde. About 5.20 p.m. it began to rain

heavily, and the pilot and crew ran the boat under the shelter of a coral reef, off which they persisted in anchoring for the night. They run mainly by observation and dead reckoning. I had a small compass, which I placed at the service of the pilot, Rameses III. All attempts to persuade them to continue the voyage were vain, for your Arab hates rain as a certain personage is reputed to detest holy-water; so, for the remainder of the day and through the doleful night that followed, they squatted, huddled together, under the dripping shelter of their rotten sail. It was as dreary a night as I ever passed, for I sat drenched to the skin, vexed at the miserable crew who preferred to bide with patience the passing of the storm rather than keep their blood in circulation by action. Even at daybreak I could not get them to stir, as it was still raining steadily. By 8 a.m. I was roused to resort to stronger measures, particularly against the doleful, dumpy skipper, and at last I got them roused out of their lethargy. By and by the rain ceased as the sun rose higher; and passing from the further shelter of islets and reefs, we steered down the open sea towards Massowah. With the decline of the day the wind fell, and we drifted, almost becalmed, during the night, sighting afar, under the starlight, the dim outline of the Abyssinian hills along the coast. Tuesday was a day of calms and light winds, with a rolling swell that made the sambuk rock terribly, and set the poor mast to groaning and working piteously, in every movement of which the skipper exhibited the profoundest sympathy. I think the cup of his

bitterness really overflowed afresh when he saw me periodically enjoying my tinned provisions. Drifting and dawdling, by Tuesday eve we were off Massowah, and saw Mount Adam, but did not venture into port until Wednesday morning, when I landed about 7 a.m., and passed quarantine, the customs, and the police in the course of the next hour. It was my second visit to Massowah, that prosperous Italia-Abyssinian town, and on both occasions I experienced the utmost kindness and consideration from the Italian authorities. Certainly an Englishman is a *persona grata* to our Italian allies, and nothing could be more friendly and courteous than their treatment of our countrymen who visit the colony of Erethrea. Massowah has grown and prospered since 1889. The weather was decidedly warm, not to say hot, but I bustled about, made my purchases and arrangements for the journey overland to Kassala, and that same afternoon was well on my way to that outpost of civilisation.

Massowah, like Suakim, is built upon a coral islet, and is also connected with the mainland by a causeway. It is, in fact, a glorified Suakim, with regular steam communication with Aden. Along its extensive quay-frontage are European-like warehouses and Government buildings, with architectural pretensions. The land-locked harbour sheltered two Italian men-of-war and fleets of native trading craft. As a rule, the Bombay native trader knows a good commercial place. A dozen or more of these British-Indians are established in business at Massowah. With my passport and other papers in order, helped by kindly Greeks, I

managed to catch the afternoon train to Saati, 17 miles inland. The railway, a metre-gauge one, skirts westward and north over the sandy, arid plain that extends from the seashore to the Abyssinian foot-hills of the Asmara mountain-ranges. It is a well-laid and ballasted line; and the powerful little locomotive, going at a good speed, began to drag the train gradually upward among rough, stony, barren heaps, some of which resembled the refuse cast from a mine or blast-furnace. There were half-a-dozen stops at way-side stations, a house and a few huts, to which a name had been given. By and by the hills were bigger, and we came abreast of Dogali, where Ras Alula and his Abyssinians had a battle with a small force of Italians and native levies, who were nearly all killed, after a desperate stand. The battlefield on the hill-top is crowned by a marble obelisk, and there are, in addition, a number of giant crosses marking where brave soldiers fell. It was 5 p.m. when the train reached Saati. . The rain was falling in torrents. There is a curious distribution of rainfall, and the want of it, over the world, and in Africa in particular. When it is the wet season at Kassala it is the dry season at Massowah and Saati, up as far as Asmara. As for Asmara town, with its six or seven thousand feet of elevation, its waterfall is supposed to be from July to September, but the place is as uncertain and full of damp mists and rains till December as the Scottish Highlands. Saati reminded me of rail-head towns in the Wild West. A mere cluster of fifty wooden shanties and boothies these, mostly cheap

grocery stores, reeking of stale tobacco, liquor, and petroleum. Up town, New York used to be famous for its combination shanties, constructed of stones, soap-boxes, sacking, and old tins—sheltering a nomad population of democratic voters and goats. Saati represents that American institution of bygone days closely. Drenched to the skin, I reached the shelter of a friendly bar, the roof of which was passably rain-proof. My baggage was soaked, and so was my negro boy and my polyglot interpreter. Putting a good face on the matter, we had a substantial, if homely, meal of the inevitable cheese, bread, sausage, and sardines, and fortified chianti. By and by some hot soup-maigre was brought, and that served finely for dessert. Meanwhile I had been trafficking for six mules and two guides, and with much pressing secured them.

At 8 that night, in the thick darkness and the rain, I set forward to enter the lonely, rocky passes, and climb the hills that lay between us and Gindah, 25 odd miles away. It is a fallacy to measure distances in the ordinary manner in Abyssinia. The time test is the best gauge of the length of the way. A man can walk a mile in ten minutes on a good level road; but let that mile be in the perpendicular, and beset with boulders, and it will take him hours. For nearly half the way, or to Saidy Gumma (I fancied the natives called it Sarah Gamp), the track was passable; beyond, it was atrocious, and my Arab guides made the worst of it. From Massowah to Kassala there are for the most part three roads—the rude

original Arab track, one that has been partly cleared for mule transport, and a third, or made road, which can be used by vehicles or artillery. The former is always the rougher, though by distance the shorter, and your natives persist in using it in preference to the other, hill climbing and broken ground being as dear to them as to monkeys. Happily, the Italians have inherited the genius and quality of the old Romans at road-making and bridge-building. It was not my fortune, though, on my way through the country, to make any great use of the main highways they have built in Abyssinia. I discovered later on, however, that the Italian mountain road towards Asmara is a marvel of boldness in conception and skill in execution. Your road-maker, old or new, is a great apostle of civilisation and commerce, and in that respect the Sirdar, Sir Herbert Kitchener, rivals our Italian friends, for he has never neglected an opportunity to construct or improve highways, and these of the best kind—railways. These long digressions seem tiring, but in the silence of the night, as one trudges or rides onward through the weary watches, just such reflections dance before the mind. Being a heavyweight, the strongest mule had been chosen for me. Our saddles were rough wooden contrivances of native make, pinching and galling to any but a hard rider, and too small for me. The native guides walked, and so did by and by my poor Soudanese servant and the hapless, broken-hearted Greek. Two dry watercourses had become howling torrents, and it was thought we should have to sit down opposite them till

the rain ceased and the waters abated. The first brook we managed at once to cross, the second we really had to sit down before, for over half-an-hour. The torrential downpour having slackened, we effected a passage girth-deep. As for the little Abyssinian mule, which stands about eleven hands high, it is deserving of the highest certificate of character. It is hardy beyond ready credence, sure-footed, and decently good-tempered for a mule—a veritable saint among its species. Abyssinia merits the reputation of being well-stocked with what in showman language are classed as wild animals. Hyenas and wolves abound even as far east as Saati, and from Keren westward to Kassala you need have no difficulty in finding a leopard or a lion. I make haste to say I am going to tell no lion stories, though of snakes and hyenas I may have something to write. Whilst we were waiting at the ford near Saidy Gumma, my Greek, hearing ominous growling, requested permission to fire to frighten the animal away. He said it was a hyena as big as a donkey. I told him not to do so, as the creature was invisible, and that I would shoot if I saw its eyes. He declared it was growling savagely, but I assured him it was but the gurgling of the waters he heard; and even were a hyena grumbling, the brute was justified in doing so on such a night.

I saw numbers of gleaming eyes later on that night, but I was not troubled with more requests to burn powder, for my companions kept discreetly in rear, whilst the guide and I pressed on. The mountain ravines up which we passed and descended got so

intolerably bad that I had to descend and walk, and in the course of three minutes I fell as many times among the rocks, whilst the mules scrambled over them like cats. Exhausted and hungry, as day was breaking at 5 o'clock we entered Gindah, and woke up the local Greek who kept the canteen. I lay down in my clothes, and slept comfortably till nearly 9 a.m. The local Italian commandant called on me whilst I was at breakfast, and through his good offices I was provided with five fresh mules and an escort of two soldiers wherewith to continue my journey. A heavy damp mist hung upon the hills when, at 10.45 a.m., I resumed the march to Asmara, to scale the great mountain plateau, which, like a wall, rises 8000 feet above the sea, forming the true highlands of Abyssinia. I have made a good many picturesque trips in my time, but the journey across those mountains is one to be remembered. At some early day Cook's tourist tickets will, no doubt, be issued for the route, by *diligence* from the Red Sea to the Nile, and the journey will repay the adventurous and the lovers of sport. There is nothing anywhere that I know of so novel and interesting as the route from Saati to Kassala. Winding in and up mountain gorges, through forests of giant cactus, *Euphorbia candelabra*, we began to scale the lofty walled range of Asmara. At every step were evidences of increased cultivation, settlement, and abundance. The road was long and toilsome, but without halt or resting, riding and climbing afoot, we plodded ahead. At last, about 4 in the afternoon, as the rain and mist cleared away, we passed

through the cutting at the end of the gorge, well named the Devil's Gateway, and emerged upon the military highway, which winds for miles along the majestic, precipitous cliffs. What a transcendent prospect, overlooking a kingdom, the sea on one hand and the remote wilderness of the Soudan on the other. By 5 p.m. I had got into Asmara, and a little later had called on Major-General Caneva, the Vice-Governor of the country. With much courtesy, he and the Chief of Staff, Major Angelotti, readily afforded me every facility for prosecuting my journey. I was furnished with maps, with two guides, and several fresh mules. Rousing my little caravan at 4 a.m. next morning, I was on the road to Keren by 6 o'clock, going along at a six-mile gait. The chill morning air was decidedly frosty, and I would have been glad to have had my overcoat had not my baggage, as usual, been a day behind. I was told that Az Teclesan was a full day's journey of eight to ten hours. Thanks to a generous Greek merchant, M. Violetta, I had a splendid mount on one of his mules. It was a rich agricultural and pasture country through which we passed, a land of undulating plains and occasional flowing streams of limpid water. So far I had found no scarcity of water on the route, nor had I troubled to carry a supply.

By 1.15 p.m. I reached Az Teclesan, had a good lunch, and went with the local priest to look at the Abyssinian Christian church. It was a large, round, circular mud building, with a haystack, grass-thatched roof, set on a hill, surrounded by a rude cemetery.

The exterior was spacious enough for a circus. Entering through a low doorway, I found myself in a narrow circular alley-way, for within the outer building was a smaller round structure, pierced with four doorways, each one opposite another. Entrance to the inner building was forbidden to all but the chief priest. Therein, I was told, were contained the sacred books and emblems. Without or within the corridor there was nothing whatever to indicate the sacred character of the edifice. During service the congregation for the most part remain without in the graveyard, only a select few being permitted within the circular corridor. Save the doorway we entered by, there was no means for lighting or ventilation, and it was dark and foul as a cavern within. I was not surprised to see that they kept gums and incense for burning in torches to clarify the air. Truth to tell, I had my doubts about the place being a church at all until the priest passed the hat round, and then I knew it was all right. The Abyssinian priest must have learned strange things from the early Alexandrian Church. He eschews soap and water, and regards residence amongst dirt and dunghills as an exaltation of sanctity. Leaving Az Teclesan about 3 in the afternoon, attended by one guide, who broke down on the way, I reached El Habborat at 6 p.m., and Keren at 11 p.m. Next morning I called on the Governor, Colonel Count Samianatelli, whom I had previously met at Suakim in 1889, when he was Italian military attaché with General Grenfell's force at the battle of Gemaizeh. We had old times to talk over, and it was not till 2

p.m.—my servants meanwhile having arrived—that I set out for Agordat, the next important military post. Asmara, Keren and Agordat, are all strongly-fortified posts, possessing works of considerable strength, perched on commanding hills. They are garrisoned by Italian colonial troops, regulars, and smart native levies, regular and irregular. Between Az Teclesan and Agordat the track again becomes very wild and picturesque, but everywhere it is possible for artillery to pass. Miles and miles of roadway have been made along the sides of mountains, or built up along the edge of river-beds, in a very substantial fashion. Save at one or two points west of Agordat, there is plenty of water to be had at short marching distances along the whole route from Saati. It was the fête-day of the Queen of Italy, and there was much firing and rejoicing in Keren. From there to Kassala the game grew more and more abundant as I made westing. There were bustards, grouse, and enormous flocks of guinea-fowl, two of which I killed with one shot of a Vetterli rifle. Gazelle and ariel were also plentiful, but I had neither time nor disposition for hunting, except for the pot.

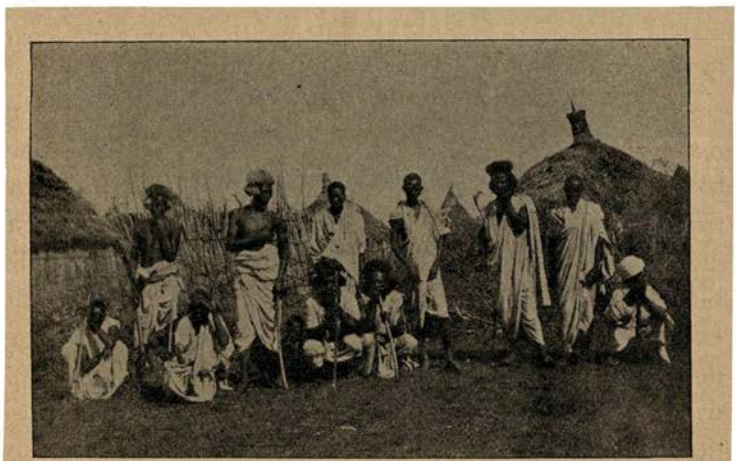
A few miles west of Keren, descending a rocky wady 900 feet in depth, I saw, as I fancied, a dozen or so of Arab children at play among the trees. It was not till catching sight of us that I was disillusioned, for the creatures, getting upon all fours, scampered off up the rocks. They were a band of apes; but even had I known sooner, I should have hesitated to fire on them for the mere sake of a skin or two. We only

made a short march, that day to Agat, where I arrived at 6.30 p.m., and slept in a native grass hut. Next morning I was off by 6 a.m., and with only one brief halt I got into Agordat—where Major Folchi commanded—at 3.30 p.m. From there I wired my arrival home. I had got into the country of the huge tamarind trees, which, though of but 50 feet or 60 feet altitude, have great spreading branches, and bolls from 8 feet to 15 feet in diameter. There is one near Algeden with 20 feet diameter of trunk. The fruit was ripe; and cracking the husks of one or two of the big oval-shaped pods, I found within, the pleasant acidulated sweet—the edible flowery pulp inclosing the seed being the colour of sulphur. As a beverage, tamarind water is more refreshing than lemonade, and it is strange it is not more commonly drunk. The pods or nuts are to be had in inexhaustible numbers. Beyond Agordat I made my first close acquaintance with hyenas and wolves. Riding ahead, on ascending a khor, I saw two lively creatures, with poker-stiff tails, regarding me not twenty paces off. For a moment I hardly realised what they were. Pulling up the mule, I descended to have a shot, whereupon they trotted across the track into the bush. They were objects of curiosity to me, and apparently I was to them. Gaining the open ground, where I could see into the bush, I saw there were not merely two, but seven or eight hyenas. Raising my rifle to fire, they evidently realised I meant business, and, like a shot from a bow, the pack were off and out of sight on the instant. Later on I saw more of their kidney, and of wolves as

well, and a leopard, but at a greater distance. Hunting invariably means loss of time; and as I was in a hurry, I refused to be drawn away from the trail.

Agordat has been, of late years, the scene of more than one desperate pitched battle. Next, or Monday morning, I started at 5.30 a.m. for Algeden —Ela Dal, as the Italians call it. By 9.45 a.m. I was in Sciaglet, and by 3 p.m. in Biscia. Holding on, I reached the outlandish post of Daura Obel at 9.15 p.m., where I was glad to find an old native grass hut to lie down in and get a drink of water. We got away from Daura Obel and its howling packs of wild beasts at 5 a.m. on Tuesday. A mist hung about the hills, but from Keren west we had left the wet and the extreme cold behind. By 10.30 a.m. I was at Algeden, which, like many other places set on the maps west of Keren, is put down miles out of its true position. These places, as I have said elsewhere, are now merely names of watering stations, only an untenanted ruined grass hut or two remaining to mark the site of whilom native villages. From Algeden it took till 6 p.m. to reach the wells of Aradib, where we had to sleep in the open, under a tree. But a few weeks ago a lion mauled and killed a native soldier there, and wounded another, who was still in the hospital. The *al fresco* menagerie was in full blast most of the night, as it was feeding-time, but the brutes let our little band severely alone. Needless to say, one slept with one's rifle handy, but sleep comes to the wayworn, despite the surroundings of an uncaged menagerie or two. I got away from Aradib at 4.30 a.m., or before

daybreak; by 8.20 a.m. I was at Metaurah, and by 11.10 a.m. at Sabderat, or Zabderat, the gateway between the last of the continuous mountain-chains. Emerging upon the great western plain, I saw the rugged, serrated peaks of Kassala and Mocram,



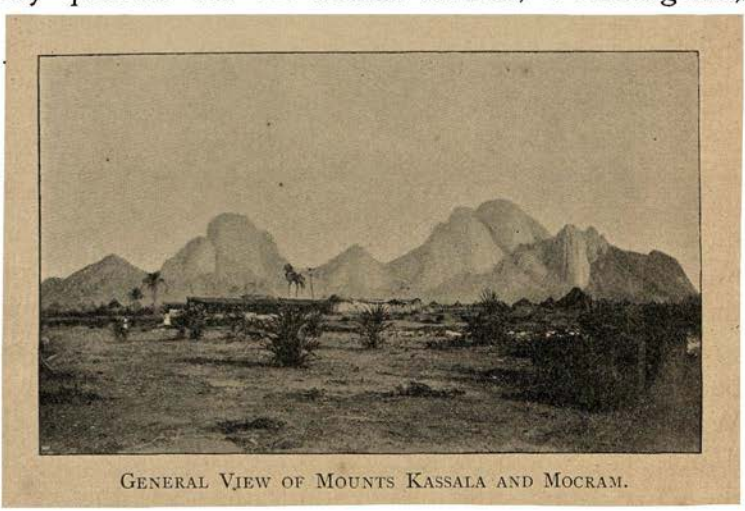
AT SABDERAT.

behind which lay my goal—Kassala fortress and town. It was 5.20 p.m., and the sun was sinking low in the west when I was met by some Italian officers and escorted into the fortress, where a welcome and hospitable dinner awaited me.

CHAPTER V.

KASSALA.—OUR NEW POSSESSION.

AFTER a week of adventurous journeyings, I settled down, comfortably tented upon the great plain of Kassala. Within a few hundred yards to the south of my quarters was the Italian fortress, a rectangular,



GENERAL VIEW OF MOUNTS KASSALA AND MOCRAM.

stout, mud-brick vallum, inclosing about four or five acres. There are redoubts with cannon at the corners, and on the east side a formidable gateway with an iron drawbridge. The latter spans the wide, dry ditch that

surrounds the walls. As further obstacles to an assault of the place, there are thorny zerebas, broken ground, and wire entanglements. What with these defences, cannon and machine guns, manned as the fortress was at that time by a battalion of native levies, aided by details of various Italian commands—in all some 800 or 900 men and a score of officers—it could have been kept against any number of dervishes. Huge stores of dhurra, wheat, and other grain were piled within the walls, under the protection of tarpaulins—enough provisions to enable the garrison to withstand a year's siege. Water is readily obtainable anywhere on the plain of Kassala, at a few yards' depth. A well within the fortress furnished an unlimited supply of that indispensable commodity. Scattered around, without the fortress, were the ordinary abodes of the civil population, the officers, and the troops. Beyond these were small stations and look-out posts, a mile or more removed from the fortress. These were still maintained and occupied, although for nearly a year no dervishes had by their presence vexed the souls of the population. Kassala was once a big and prosperous town, but its greatness had departed. Mahdism has been the deadly upas that has destroyed the Soudan. With the downfall of the dervishes, Kassala will doubtless again become a city of greater importance than ever. Its situation is admirable. At the very portal of Abyssinia, on the highway to the sea, *via* Massowah or Suakim, through it must pass the vast wealth of the boundless plains that stretch hence on the west, through the "Island of Meroe," to Khartoum;

on the south, to Senaar, and away to the north. All these are magnificent pasture-lands, as Africa goes, and there is water enough to be had for the lifting to cultivate millions of acres of the rich loam that now lies arid. That is of the future.

When the Egyptians formerly held Kassala, a great deal of tillage was done, and cotton was grown successfully. Indeed, next to the lofty, angular outlines of Mounts Kassala and Mocram, that, like watchtowers, are detached from the last of the Abyssinian ranges, and keep guard over the great western African prairies, the most conspicuous object of the landscape is a big cotton-gin mill, with its tall brick chimney, standing within the fortress. From the beginning of the war, the two-storeyed mill served the purpose that the White Tower did to the Tower of London—a central keep and stronghold. The chimney also was employed as a coign of observation, sentinels mounting to the top by steps in the inside; and the lightning-conductor bore the banner of Italy fluttering in the hot desert blasts. Kassala, outside the fort, is plainly of the Central Soudan, for the native huts are circular structures like haystacks, each surrounded by an inclosure of prickly bush or a palisade of corn-stalks or reedy grass. African grass is of a great many varieties, from the tender herb of an English lawn to the gross, overgrown monstrosity, more akin to bamboo than the succulent green of home pasturage. The bazaar and business quarter of the Kassala of to-day lie a few hundred yards to the south-west of the fortress. There are but a few score of huts, and

square, squat, mud-walled houses, set facing each other in a spacious quadrangle. A dozen Greek merchants or traders own the more pretentious buildings, and vend such articles as captivate the native taste, and the indispensable requisites for civilised beings dwelling in the wilds—liquor, tobacco, tea, coffee, sugar, jams, and sardines. There is even a wooden billiard-table in the place, "with elliptical balls and spiral cues." To the west of the fortress is the old Kassala, all of which now visible is a square mile of ruined mud-brick buildings. The ancient ditch around the place and part of the loopholed town still remain. As for the four big outlying mud forts, though crumbling into decay, they are even yet conspicuous landmarks, and are used as outposts. How generously prolific the soil is when watered and tended, I had chances of seeing. The Italian officers had two small gardens, wherein grew luxuriantly tomatoes, beans, and most of the vegetables and fruits common to Europe, as well as dates, figs, bananas, and citrons. Away to the east, nestling close under the side of Jebel Kassala, is the ruined brick mosque known as the Kadema. It contains the tomb of the local holy man, the venerated Persian Sheik Morghana, who, with his wealthy brother, long ago did much to convert Africa to Mohammedanism. His reputation for sanctity and charity have been kept green, and he has been informally canonised by Moslems and Christians alike, for both resort to his tomb to pray. The building was over two hundred feet long, with ornate stuccoed columns, fine arabesque gateways, and a handsome

cornicing. Your dervish is a terrible iconoclast, worse even than the Scotch reformers and covenanters. He will none of your basilicas, or houses of prayer or worship. All that must be done in the open, or, at most, within a fence, grill, or low mud-walled inclosure, just sufficient to keep dogs and cattle out. A rich tabernacle he abhors; and so Osman Digna, Abu Girgeh, and the rest of the dirty, cutty-sarked gang

RUINED MOSLEM MOSQUE—THE KADEMA OF KASSALA.

who came Kassala way, wrought to throw down the walls, arches, and columns of the mosque and the minaret. As the fine burnt-brick walls were built by master workmen, using good cement, though they hewed and picked for years, they were unable to altogether wreck the structure. The "groves of Akadema," the hundreds of mollahs' houses, and those of their disciples, however, they managed to raze.

The Beni Amer Arabs, Abyssinians, negroes, and

others dwelling around Kassala eked out existence by cultivating a little grain, and raising camels, sheep, goats, and donkeys. Owing to dervish incursions, the majority of the natives had migrated for safety east of Agordat, near which there was an Arab population numbering over 15,000 souls, living in grass huts and tents. In 1883 Kassala was a place of importance, with between 50,000 and 70,000 inhabitants. In those days the plain was widely tilled, and there were dwellings, with fair and pleasant gardens. Abundance for the husbandman was achieved with little or no exertion, for the soil is so rich that it has but to be tickled with a hoe or a stick to laugh into the "proverbial harvest." To-day, jackals and hyenas are the only denizens of the roofless walls, the desolate streets, and alley-ways of old Kassala. Its lease to the destroyers was one of England's liberal overtures to Mahdism. Kassala of December 1897 I found was little more than a town by courtesy—a name. I don't complain of that, for in Africa and on a map a name is truly most useful, and something to conjure with. Many a long day's journey have I made to arrive at a place marked with a name, where there was neither sign of inhabitant nor conspicuous natural object in the vicinity to apparently justify bestowing any appellation on the spot. Yet it has almost invariably been with entire satisfaction that I have halted at such spots and bivouacked for the night, for was I not in a named location, and that is much to the wanderer. Somehow there comes a sense of home-feeling in snuggling down in a place owning the dignity of a name, and

even the close growling of leopards and hyenas, or other wild animals, does not dispossess you of that gratification. Gracious! can anybody in Europe realise that hyenas, as big as costers' donkeys, are more plentiful around Kassala than dogs on Clapham Common in London? Fortunately, though big and strong, with jaws of the power of an iron-shearing machine, the hyenas are but arrant cowards and scavengers. It is forbidden to shoot them, lest the noise of firearms at night alarm the garrison and natives. A stout stick is generally ample for the purpose of beating the more intrusive out of range. One night my Soudanese servant, Fergullah, in my temporary absence at dinner in the fortress—I messed with the Italian officers—was astounded to see an impudent hyena poke his nose through the doorway of my hut. Possibly the hungry animal sniffed some titbit the negro had by him for supper. Seizing a thick stick with his two hands, Fergullah dealt it a blow which sent the brute off howling. The same night an equally bold hyena in an adjacent zereba seized a young cow by the flank, and tore a piece out of the wretched animal. Two or three soldiers rushed to the rescue, and the hyena beat an instant retreat. A few nights later my neighbour's ass was snatched up. But these little nightly diversions were too common to attract more than passing notice. My chief cause of complaint was when the brutes, like dogs baying the moon, for some unknown reason took it upon themselves to forgather and howl with extra verve the whole night long. Sleep was then well-nigh impossible.

It was part of the joint understanding between Great Britain and Italy that, with the retrocession of Kassala, the new frontier-line for Erethrea should be fixed at Zabderat, a post about 30 miles east. I have said "new frontier-line," though in reality the original boundary of the colony of Erethrea was at Zabderat. The extension to Kassala was undertaken to oblige England and Egypt, and in the interests particularly of the peace of the Eastern Soudan. At the retrocession of Kassala the frontier reverted to the line adopted when Italy adventured into Abyssinia and founded Erethrea.

One could not wish for a better set of friends and comrades than the score or so of Italian officers I found quartered in Kassala, under Major de Bernardis, the commandant. Their numbers made the routine of military duty relatively light. The 800 or 900 troops, regulars and irregulars, had little to do besides mounting guard and attending ordinary drills. Most of the scouting had been done by groups of irregulars, or small bands sent out by Lieutenant Crispi, who was in charge of that duty. Except by colour of sash, or fez-tassel, there was little to distinguish between the regular and irregular Ascari, *i.e.*, native soldier. The dress of both consists merely of baggy cotton drawers or pyjamas and a loose roll of white calico or jacket of the same material, a gaily-coloured cotton sash, and a red fez with a bulky yellow, blue, or green tassel. On their bare feet were loosely strapped serviceable native sandals of hide, and for arms they had the new Italian magazine rifle and short sword-bayonet.

Their cartridges they carried around the body in a waist-belt of soft leather, roughly fitted with receptacles for the cases. The Italian rifle is of a smaller bore than the .303 Lee-Metford, and is in many respects a much better weapon. I fired over 300 rounds with it, and know it fairly well. It shoots accurately, does not get out of order, is simple in construction, and the magazine, which is on the Mannlicher system, as used in the German army, is far in advance of the clumsy Lee-Metford adaptation. Each case contains six cartridges, and these are as readily, nay, can be more quickly inserted than one shell can be put into the Martini-Henry or Lee-Metford. The stock home-military argument against giving the soldier anything but the occasional right to draw on his magazine in firing, as otherwise he would waste ammunition, does not hold good in service there, even with the native levies. In all the many actions fought, the men behaved with prudence, knowing the powers of their weapons. The Egyptians as yet have but the Martini-Henry wherewith to combat the dervishes. Were they armed with a weapon similar to the Italian levies, it would increase their fighting powers by 25 per cent., for the range of the rifle is great, and the trajectory insignificant up to 600 metres. Doubtless, to the eye, the "Gippy" is a more thoroughly trained soldier nowadays than the Italian Ascari. The mixed races who compose the Italian native levies, Abyssinians, Christian and Moslem; Arabs and Soudani, are small, lithe, and agile as ponies. To run or march a score of miles over rough ground in a few

hours, calls for no special exertion on their part. Lightly clad and active, they will run for half a day alongside a trotting horse. Most of them shoot very well, and, as they are accustomed to working or fighting together in groups, in open country, they make incomparably fine scouts or skirmishers. The mounted dervishes who, in 1896, used to raid all around Kassala, arriving in bands of from 10 to 300 horsemen, always recoiled before small parties of Italian Ascari, for the latter, without needing to form square or fix bayonets, always greeted them with such a sharp rifle-fire that saddles were speedily emptied. Kassala itself underwent a three months' siege by dervishes during the Italian occupation. I visited all the battlefields in the vicinity, and can bear testimony to the fact that the dervishes chose excellent and strong positions, which they fortified with no little skill. The operations of dislodging them from Mocram, and particularly from Tukruf, were in reality brilliant actions, fought and gained by the Italians with, on their side, relatively small forces. Ghastly trophies of slain dervishes still strew the ground in the vicinity of the enemy's camps, for neither hyenas nor jackals have yet succeeded in removing all traces of the windrows of whitened, disjointed skeletons.

On the report of Colonel Parsons, R.A., it was decided by the Sirdar that the new garrison of Kassala should consist of the 16th Egyptian battalion and a detachment of artillerymen. The force was to go by sea from Suakim to Massowah, and march thence by the military roads to Kassala. To forward the re-

occupation every way, the Italians offered to lend or sell to our military authorities the Krupp guns of the fort, with the ammunition and all stores in the place, together with buildings, furniture, and so forth. A little later on, when the 16th battalion was going round by sea, it was determined to despatch a small mounted force overland, together with contingents of native allies. It had also been part of the international settlement that the Italian local native irregulars should be free to transfer their services to the Khedive; but there were doubts openly expressed that few would do so. From Suakim to Kassala, over the former much-travelled old telegraph and postal road, is about 320 miles. Here is an official report drawn up from Arabs and others of the Suakim-Kassala road. From Suakim to Tokar, over gently-undulating country, *via* El Teb wells, is about 40 miles. "Leaving Tokar for Kassala, the route *via* Khor Bakara leads to the following places:—Tehrin, Debalawit, Odwan, Kashmel-Langeb, Hadaweb, Kashm El-Karai, Hahbakta, Mulhatai Hakalt, Adaradeb, Missrar, Khashmsalaa, Soutai Dinaeb, Tita-Damir, Tamagwateh, Logweb, Tiragaga, Karamati, Laga Awi, Sha-Aloteb, Ali Geberet, Kassala. The distance between these places differs from 10 to 12 miles, and the water supply in each of these places is sufficient for any number of camels. In most of these places new wells should be dug, the old ones being filled up; but the water is not very deep, between 4 feet and 12 feet. The whole road is covered with a vegetation and thorny trees, but the

tracks are the open plains. From Tita-Damir the tracks take a south-westerly direction and the Khor-Baraka is left on the left. The whole distance from Tokar to Kassala is estimated at 280 miles."

This track had been in almost daily use for months prior to the re-occupation, the dervishes having been driven west. For some as yet unexplained reason, neither I nor any non-military Europeans were permitted to travel over it till the beginning of 1898. As a matter of fact, I made formal application for leave to do so, both from Suakim to Kassala, and from Kassala back to Suakim. It was reserved for Captain M'Kerrel to be the first European to reopen the road. He passed over it with a party in an official capacity, after which there was no further objection to me making the trip.

From the hour of their arrival in Erethrea at the end of November the Anglo-Egyptian troops met with the heartiest of welcomes from the official and civil population of the Italian colony. Massowah turned out to greet them; Asmara, Keren, and Agordat were not slack in the warmth of their reception. Care had been taken to have rest-stations properly equipped for them, and water had been stored in ample quantity for the needs of all. Unlimited transport facilities were also placed at their disposition. No fewer than 900 camels were allotted for transport. Even the little Abyssinian mule, which some contend is one of the few really good things the country produces, was given over in numbers for their use. I have known the "army mule" in various lands, the Mexican

mule, and the Spanish mule, well-nigh since I can remember anything. Naturally, the egregious mule is a malediction, but there is less of evil and more of the spirit of blessing in the Abyssinian type than I had ever expected to find behind his asinine ears. The creature is actually moderately reasonable, and with persuasion will gallop in a deprecatory fashion. I was not surprised that for every day's wear and tear the Italian officers preferred the Abyssinian mule as a mount to imported Arabs or Syrian steeds, and captured Dongowali and Nubawi horses. One of the pets here, apart from huge ostriches and gentle gazelle, is a lively six months old colt, captured from Osman Digna, and now bearing his name. So far as I could discern, the solitary life of a frontier post had not injuriously affected either the health or spirits of my Italian hosts. Born in a land overflowing with wine, from which a measurable flood reaches even to Kassala, it is wonderful how naturally abstemious all of them are in the matter of food as well as drink. Their tastes and pleasures are simple. They are not even great card-players, but pass the hours mainly in smoking, chatting, or reading. Among them there was at least one good tenor, Lieutenant Alfredo, not the least bit "throaty," and of an evening there was much singing of arias from operas old and new, from "Trovatore" to "Cavaliere Rusticana," and occasional popular songs, with the inseparable choruses. How akin are the tastes of soldiers the world over! I have heard Soudanese negroes humming martial airs, and my Ascari guides were always improvising and chanting

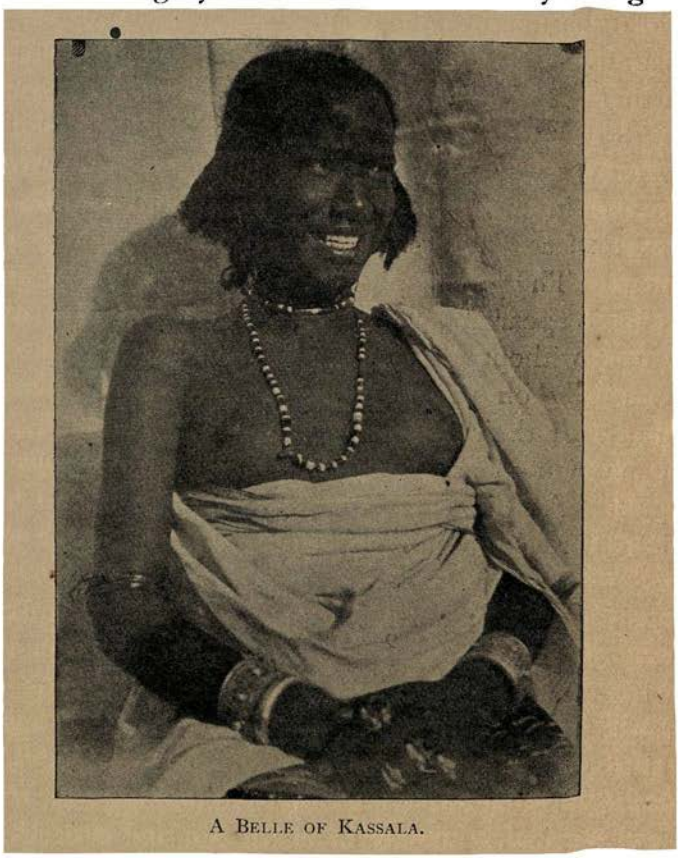
as we marched along. No Italian "circolo" or mess-table would be happy without "Finicule-Finicula," and the song of the Bersagliere, "Salvatore." Nightly, therefore, the walls of the fortress re-echo to

Torre mio se ne partuto,
E partuto pi e frontiere,
Era bello Torre mio
L'hanno fatto bersagliere.

Perhaps that which most impressed a European arriving in the Soudan, and best described the conditions of society, was to see every man going about armed. The shepherd, instead of a peaceful crook, carried a spear or sword, and the trader never stirred abroad without his weapons. The people seemed continually on the move, journeying from place to place with their flocks and families. Strangely, too, the women—Christian and Moslem—go about unveiled. As the first Englishman to arrive in many years, I was an object of curiosity for a time to them. Such an occasion was not always let pass without the exercise of the small common vanity of displaying their jewellery and charms. Descending to draw water one afternoon from a well in the khor near Aradil, I saw a woman standing and reclining against a tree, with her hands in an artistic pose above her head, grasping the branches. Her scant, airy, native dress consisting mainly of necklaces, and bracelets on arms and limbs neither hid nor marred the perfect symmetry of her form. The glossy rich ebony skin shone with the soft lustre of velvet. A black Venus, surely, I thought, whilst her features were inclined

aside; but at the moment she turned her head to look at me, there was disclosed as diabolically ugly a face as ever was set on human shoulders.

How the mighty had fallen! But ten years gone



A Belle of Kassala.

since the dervish power overran the whole Egyptian Soudan and even beyond the limits of that whilom most spacious empire. Nay, was it not as late as 1896 that one thousand bloodthirsty followers of Khalifa

Abdullah came like thieves in the night and took the village of Mogelo, but six hours' journey to the south-east of Kassala? In 1895 Kassala itself was invested by them, and two stiff battles, Mocram and Tukruf, had to be fought before they were driven away. The visitations of the Mahdists at Agordat and other places farther east of Kassala came earlier. In the winter of 1891-2 ten thousand dervishes, of whom half had firearms, came to raid and burn, and passed to the east of Agordat, which then had a garrison of 2500 regulars and irregulars. With some military skill, they pitched their camp under a hill giving them command of the Khor-Baraka, where, by a little scraping of the sand, water is always procurable in inexhaustible quantity. Water is the great regulator of life and destiny in the arid Soudan. If a journey has to be undertaken, or human work of any sort has to be done, the water question has a prominence in all things that would delight the most rabid teetotaler or Gradgrind Water Company. And yet another merit lay in the dervish position. Behind their camp, a few hours away, was Grega, the capital of the numerous Beni Amer tribe, who were not disposed to quarrel with them at that period. The Beni Amer are half-brothers to the Hadendowas, and, like them, Fuzzy-Wuzzies—that is, the men delight in wearing abundant and frizzled locks, which they too conscientiously saturate with mutton fat. An exquisite and gilded Beni Amer or Hadendowa "masher" has his hair dressed until he seems to bear upon his head two huge bunches of tawny corkscrew candles, one standing erect, the other

dangling around his neck and shoulders, dropping and distilling anything but sweetness in his walks abroad. That their long hair brings them no peace, but grief, goes without saying. Ordinary parasites have their degrees of latitude and longitude, outside of which they are not to be found. There is one, however, that thrives and battens apace, alike at the frigid or the torrid zone, the pole or the equator, and one only.

The Agordat garrison had all their work cut out for them in order to draw water with any measure of safety from the adjacent wells in the valley under the dhoum palms. Mahdist riflemen swarmed in the greater and lesser khors, in the extensive palm groves, and behind the ridges and rocks of the broken and lumpy ground. The wells were but 500 yards east of the eastern fortress, which stands upon a conical hill of magnesian limestone, about 250 feet above the Khor-Baraka. Even from that dominating point, the garrison could not succeed, either by cannon or rifle fire, in quieting the enemy. Six hundred yards west of the eastern fortress stands a still larger work. It is a structure of some pretension, solidly built of stone, after the type made familiar by Vauban—a pentagon, with protecting stout circular towers or redoubts, a deep fosse, a secure gateway, and what not besides. The place is big enough to hold four battalions. It held two, if not three, at that time. The western fortress occupies the highest peak of a small range of hills. As it is at an altitude of 500 feet above the plain, it commands an extensive view, and the fire

from its guns can be made effective in all directions. Without its support the eastern fortress would have been untenable. The latter work consists of a series of encircling stone walls of no great height, with a bigger but similar structure crowning the conical-topped hill. What with shell-fire and musketry, the dervishes stood off at times; but in order to get easy possession of the water, it was found advisable to hastily construct a covered way to the wells. On the second day, to clear the khor of the enemy, the Italians sent out a four-gun battery, with a battalion of infantry, who advanced about 1000 yards. Nothing loath, the enemy hurried to meet the Italian attack, which, by sad mischance, at first failed. The dervishes rushed the battery, which temporarily fell into their hands, and the remnant of troops that escaped being cut down were driven back pell-mell. The late General Arimondi, who fell gallantly fighting at Adowa, was then Colonel Arimondi, and Commandant of Agordat. Perceiving that, for some unknown cause, there was confusion in the dervish ranks, he ordered out the whole of his available force. The attack was instantly renewed, the guns were quickly recovered, and the dervishes were effectually routed, losing over 1000 slain. Unhappily, as at Tukruf, the Italian losses had also been very severe, several hundred men on each occasion having been killed and wounded. The dervishes, however, at each fight lost their principal leaders, and had many lesser emirs killed.

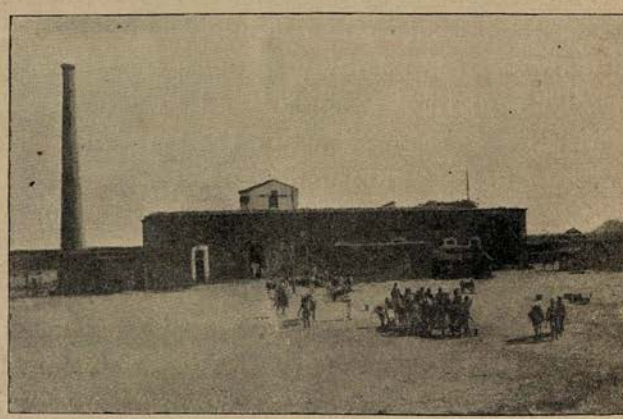
Sirdar Sir Herbert Kitchener, though fortune has favoured him as often as any man, leaves nothing to

chance that can be arranged beforehand. Another of his excellent characteristics is, wherever possible, to do his work himself. He is always accessible, ready to listen, but relies on his own judgment, and ever-determined in its execution. If he desires to put his own hand to a measure, no toil, no trouble is too great for him to undertake. When the retrocession of Kassala was drawing near, although busily occupied up the Nile at Berber, he undertook the long journey down to Cairo, and thence to Suakim and Massowah, to meet Major-General Canevas, then commanding Erethrea, and the other Italian authorities. It was in Massowah, during a brief visit made in November-December 1897, that the Sirdar settled the details respecting the passage through the Italian colony of the Egyptian troops. When they started from Massowah, on the 29th November, upon the march up country, Khedival cavalry had penetrated as far upon the other side towards Kassala as Aderamat, on the Atbara, but four days' journey northward. The march of the 16th Egyptian battalion through Erethrea was a memorable affair, and in the nature of a triumphal procession. It showed to the natives and the world that the Italians and English were fast friends; and further, that out of the fine physical Fellaheen stock we had managed to make magnificent-looking soldiers. One of the questions I was asked by an Abyssinian Ascari was whether we English were not really brothers of the Italians, and subjects of King Umberto. That we could be on such amicable terms without being subjects was what impressed them, and made it difficult

for the oriental mind to comprehend. The 16th had but three English commissioned officers, their commander, Major Nicholson, the second, Captain Dwyer, and Surgeon-Captain Fleming. These gentlemen rode on horseback, but the battalion marched afoot the whole distance up from Massowah, headed by their brass band, a novelty west of Keren, and led by their sergeant-instructor, stalwart Staff-sergeant Nicklin. At each Italian station *en route* they received an ovation, military and populace greeting them. Quarters, water, and food were prepared in advance for the 16th, so they were enabled to settle down at once without discomfort when they arrived at each day's camping ground. They did some splendid marching on the way, covering greater distances than the Bersagliere, or best Italian marching troops. Their journey up country, taken all through, was a record performance. The gunners in particular were big muscular fellows. As for the infantry, the 16th, they were clad in new kharkee uniforms, with brown belts, stout high-lows, blue putties for the nether limbs, with kharkee caftans over their red fezes.

Not only did Major-General Canevas show the utmost courtesy and kindness to the officers and men of the Egyptian force marching through Erethrea, but his subordinates at every military station on the way did the same. Massowah and Asmara made them royally welcome. Colonel Count Sanminiatelli Zabarella, who had, as military attaché, met the Egyptian officers before at Suakim, treated them in princely style at Keren, from which place west he

was in command. He even accompanied Colonel Parsons to Kassala, and assisted in the transfer of the fortress. At Agordat the 16th was most hospitably entertained by Cavalier Major Folchi, and so were they fêted into Kassala, where Major de Bernardis and his officers took care of them. It was at 9 a.m. on the 21st December that, to the music of Italian airs played by their own band, the Egyptian battalion



VIEW OF INTERIOR OF FORT KASSALA.

arrived before Kassala. One mile out they were received and welcomed by Commandant de Bernardis and a guard of honour, who escorted them to a camp near the fort, specially prepared for their reception. A salute of twenty-one guns was fired from the redoubts, and the Egyptian flag was run up beside that of Italy over the fortress. After their toilsome march the health of the men left nothing to be desired, only four being sick, and very few having had to be carried because of foot

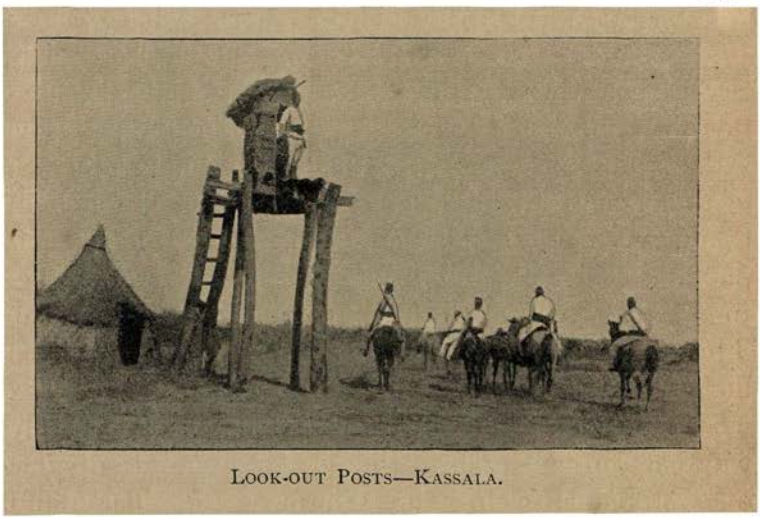
soreness. Their commander, Major Nicholson, however, suffered from the sun, for though at that period the nights were cold, the days were often terribly hot. Indeed, later on, Major Nicholson had to go away from Kassala, on sick-leave. At noon on Christmas day 1897 the formal handing over of Kassala to the Khedival Government took place. The troops were formed in line on either side of the main gateway, and saluted each other. Colonel Parsons having asked and obtained leave from Colonel Count Sanminiatelli, the Egyptian relieving guard crossed the drawbridge and took the place of the Italian. They were followed by the artillerymen. The Italian flag was lowered; a salute of twenty-one guns was thereafter fired. Subsequently the Italian troops quitted the vicinity of Kassala, going back to Zabderat, which is now their farthest westward post. During the time I spent with them I learned to know that the Italian officers strongly disapproved of the action of their Government in abandoning Kassala, which had cost Italy so much life and treasure to seize and hold. They believed that ultimately the place would have repaid its possession; and though not blaming the British Government, felt mortified that their own should have so weakly yielded it.

Pending the re-occupation of Kassala by the 16th battalion, other events connected therewith were happening. Colonel Parsons had arranged, with the Sirdar's approval, for the thorough restoration of the province to Egyptian authority, and its proper re-colonisation. The expatriated sheiks and tribesmen

were to be invited back, the Egyptian re-occupation was to be made with a degree of impressive ceremony, and the domination of the true Moslem faith brought in. Wide preparations were made for the ceremonial functions of entering into possession, and for rehabilitating the famous Kadema, or mosque of Kassala, and its schools, and re-instituting mollahs. Sidi Ali Morghani, a lineal descendant of the Persian missionary, was to come from Egypt, *via* Suakim, overland to Kassala, in order to be installed as the custodian of the tomb and mosque of his ancestor. The event was to be celebrated with religious and military ceremonial, and the natives from far and wide were expected to attend in tens of thousands. As, after Eastern fashion, the Morghanis are profoundly venerated, the fact of Sidi Ali's anticipated advent, coupled with the statement that the sacred Kadema was to be rebuilt, left no doubt that the effect which would be produced throughout the Soudan would be profound. Even the Khalifa Abdullah would hear of the restoration of the Kadema, and realise it meant a direct and serious blow to his power. I had seen in previous years young Sidi Ali Morghani hailed as a deliverer from the errors of Mahdism, and watched fanatical crowds of Hadendowa in Suakim struggle to kiss the hem of his garment. To get him to Kassala was a master-stroke of sound policy, for once more, doubtless, would pilgrims flock from all parts of the Soudan to the Kadema at Kassala, holding it to be next, if not equal, in worth, to Mecca or Medina to journey there. On the 15th of December, Sidi Ali Morghani, accompanied

by 150 followers and many Arab sheiks, left Suakim, going by camel caravan to Kassala. Captain M'Kerrel, who had arrived from Berber, left next day with 100 men of the Camel corps, overtook the party, and rode with them the rest of the way. When, about twelve days thereafter, the party arrived at Kassala, they received a great welcome and ovation. Sidi Ali Morghani proceeded to the Kadema, near which a house had been restored for his reception, and the proceedings passed off with the grandeur and fervour anticipated. Means were found to assist in rebuilding the extensive ruins, and the presence of such orthodox Moslem leaders, as Sidi Ali Morghani and his followers, has put an end to the last fag-ends of the Mahdist craze in the Eastern Soudan. Colonel Parsons, who arrived at Kassala a week in advance of the 16th battalion, promptly re-enlisted 600 of the Italian irregulars in the Egyptian service, paying them at the stipulated rate of one and a half lira a day, with, when off on duty, an allowance of flour. The new troops were directed to proceed at once under their own officers, and turn the dervishes out of El Fasher and Osobri, native towns on the Atbara, each sixty miles away, but in opposite directions. Shouting and gesticulating, the Ascari ran, and quickly making their preparations for war, were soon upon the march westward. Four hundred proceeded to deal with El Fasher, and 200 undertook the capture of Osobri, which was held by 60 Mahdists, whilst the former place was garrisoned by 200 dervishes. El Fasher was rushed, and a score of the enemy slain; whilst, after being invested for a

few days, Osobri too fell into Egyptian hands ere the 1st of January 1898. Thus were the Gosh and Atbara valleys opened up to Berber, and the Khalifa's outposts driven in, hundreds of miles towards Abu Delek and Khartoum. An incidental effect was also the removal of all fear of dervish raiding around Tokar or Suakim. After the events referred to, and at the end of 1897,



LOOK-OUT POSTS—KASSALA.

the 4th Egyptian battalion, being no longer required to guard the Red Sea littoral, was ordered to proceed from Suakim to Berber. Under the command of Major Sparkes, and led by Major Sitwell, the troops marched the whole distance, 265 miles, in a fortnight, arriving at Dakala, at the mouth of the Atbara, fit and well.

CHAPTER VI.

Beginning of the Atbara Campaign.

Some day Abyssinia and its mountains will become a favourite resort of travellers—an African Alps. The Atlas range in Morocco is nearer Europe, and much of the scenery there is grand. Yet it falls far short of the majesty of the Abyssinia chains, and it lacks their peculiar charm of presenting sharp outlines, and in being covered with vegetation characteristically tropical. The country, moreover, abounds with both big and little game, from elephants and lions to ostriches and wood pigeons—a happy hunting ground. I made my way back from Keren to the sea by untrodden paths, over stupendous cliffs, and through deep, dark, and toilsome ravines. Many adventures befel me by the way and I saw much big game, but this is a narrative of warfare, and not of sport. Hungry, wet, and tired through scrambling for twelve hours over rough rocks, I have at night gone to sleep soundly, though lions and leopards have sniffed around the camp fires where my followers crouched, and our mules huddled near for safety. Exhaustion from exercise in breezy highlands, is a better specific for fear and gives finer contempt of danger than big doses of Dutch courage. Shall

I disclose a *quasi* professional secret? It is not the risk and rack of battle that most tries the soldier, be he old or young campaigner. Often an engagement is positively longed for by veteran and callow, to gain respite from the toil of much marching, the continual roughing it, moil of changing camps, and need for a decent meal. Men become strung up or wearied out by too much hardship, and welcome the prospect of a fight as a means to an interval for peaceful repose, a few regular meals, and an opportunity to enjoy the aroma that comes of the use of water and soap.

I was glad to get back to the relatively civilised comforts of Suakim; I was still better pleased, later on, to reach Cairo and taste of the flesh-pots of Egypt once more; and I was altogether happy when, at the beginning of 1898, I found myself on board a P. and O. liner, bound for home. As the Nile, like fortune, is best taken at the flood, and in all the string of previous Soudan campaigns August and high Nile was a first consideration, I expected to remain in England for several months. The dervishes willed otherwise. True, Lord Cromer and the Sirdar sought to dispense with the attendance of war correspondents about that period, and impose what were justly regarded as unusual conditions. Whilst telegrams from the front showed that an important movement of some kind was afoot amongst the dervishes, and that the Khalifa was at Kerreri, eighteen miles north of Omdurman, with his army, an order was sprung early in January upon the English press that correspondents would not be allowed south of Assouan. There was,

however, a reservation in the case of a press agency, that one of its representatives, aptly dubbed "a tame correspondent," by a critic, would be allowed at Wady Halfa or rail-head, and that he should be the sole medium of non-official (?) communication between the army and the press. This pronouncement the *Daily Telegraph* boldly challenged, and the great journals of London and the provinces, almost without exception, supported that view, contending the press had a right to have its representatives at the front, and that they should be given reasonable liberty to discharge their duty of informing the British public of the course of events. The reason assigned by the Sirdar and Lord Cromer for withholding permission from war correspondents to accompany the troops was, that the means of transport were so taxed to supply the army, that the presence of non-combatants, such as journalists, was but adding needless burden. Whether that official explanation warrants the public in debarring themselves of the means of early independent and trustworthy accounts of what their military servants are doing, the condition of the men, and the progress and chances of that most serious of all national affairs, a war, it is for the people at large to determine. Probably there are other ways open. There are always other non-combatants with an army besides press men, whose attendance could, in the public interest, perhaps be better dispensed with than correspondents. So great was the outcry against the restriction, that, within twenty-four hours, the regulation had to be relaxed, and war correspondents from all representative British newspapers received

permission to proceed to Wady Halfa and railhead.

I do not think it worth while to refer at any great length to this matter, which in the early days of last January caused considerable discussion and created some indignation. Various minor grounds besides those stated, were put forward by the authorities as further excuses for excluding press representatives at that date. Among the additional reasons given was that the campaign was an Egyptian one. That, however, did not bear examination, for the Khedive himself, in answer to an inquiry, declared that he favoured the presence of war correspondents with his troops. Besides, it was notorious that British officers lent by our Government were in command of the Egyptian army, and that an exclusively British force was actually on its way to the front. Although out of chronological order, I may as well mention now as later, that in Cairo I saw Lord Cromer, and at Wady Halfa the Sirdar, upon this very subject. The former said that he was chiefly to blame in the matter, the excluding order being thought to be actually in the interest of the newspapers, as it was believed that they would not care to be put to the expense of keeping representatives at the front in the dull season. Diplomatically, and rather prettily, the tables were turned upon the press by the assertion that editors did not exercise enough care in making their selection of representatives, and unfit men were often sent out, who did much harm in many ways. How could I differ with so distinguished an authority upon the choice of right

men? The Sirdar, whom I interviewed at some length on the question, whilst expressing the identical views of Lord Cromer, put forward several new points. He persisted that the transport difficulty was no slight one, and that he had to count and weigh his means of provisioning the troops to a lb. The railroad building had to go on so as to be ready for next autumn's campaign, and troops had to be kept at the front not only supplied, but surplus stores had to be accumulated as rapidly as possible to provide against various possible contingencies. No correspondents would be allowed to go forward until things were ready. As for himself personally, he had always been ready, at the right moment, to assist correspondents to discharge their duties. These duties, when well done, he knew to be of help and value to the army as well as the nation. He would take care in future, as in the past, that they should miss nothing worth seeing, or be kept back if a battle was expected. Timely notice would be given to them to be on hand, and their telegraphic messages would be transmitted over the military wires. All he asked was that in action, as before, they would not speak to the staff; for the rest, they were free to go where they liked. When in camp, they were not to stray outside or visit outposts. In the intervals when there was no active campaigning, the best thing they could do was to go home. They could do nothing, for there was nothing to do, and he did not want them hanging around. When there was work for them, however, he would gladly welcome them back. He wished that there had been some

better and more clearly defined official regulations respecting the presence and position of war correspondents with armies in the field.

With the declining Nile, towards the close of 1897, it had been anticipated by the military authorities that there would be no further serious fighting before August 1898. Whether it was the re-occupation of Kassala or the presence of the pugnacious gunboats above Berber, evidently the Khalifa was temporarily of a mind to strike the advanced river-posts held by Egyptian troops, before they could be reinforced. The dervish leader was no doubt cognisant of the fact that many of the Sirdar's troops were echeloned in the Dongola province between El Ordeh and Merawi, and he probably thought that moving upon the interior lines from Omdurman upon Dakala, at the mouth of the Atbara, and Berber, he could arrive there first and dispose of the relatively weak garrisons. On the last day of the year, 1897, as a bolt from the blue came the demand from the front, from Major-General Hunter, for reinforcements. The Sirdar, slow to come to conclusions unless well assured of his facts, decided there was risk in the situation, and asked for the help of a brigade of British troops. Three regiments then in Egypt—the Camerons, Lincolns, and Warwicks, were ordered up to the front. Within forty-eight hours the first detachment of these troops was on its way up the Nile, and in even less time the fact was circulated in Wady Halfa and Berber that the English soldiers were coming to do battle against the dervishes. "Tommy Atkins" left

such a reputation for doughty valour in the 1884–5 Gordon relief expedition, that the whole Soudan tribes have ever since held him in respectful fear as a warrior —one not rashly to be meddled with. Major, now Lieutenant-General Grenfell, who had assumed the command of the British forces in Egypt, assisted by every means the despatch of aid. The Sirdar, as usual, was untiring, and saw to everything, strengthening his outposts and defences. By using the steamers on the Dongola river-reaches, and the riverian railway running from the Third Cataract or Kerma, towards Wady Halfa, he brought down the Egyptian troops that could be spared from that region, whirling them across the new direct desert line up to Abu Hamed, and marching them to Berber in less time than the Khalifa could have moved his force to Shendy. Thus Sir Herbert showed that, with the possession of steamers and railroads, though moving men and supplies over 800 miles, the real possession of interior lines of communication was in his hands, and not in those of the Khalifa. With a rush the position was saved, and he could afford to wait further development of the enemy's intention.

To give timely warning of the dervish movements and plans, the Sirdar had a force of native irregulars and friendlies constantly on the alert along both banks of the Nile south of Berber. On the west bank were the Jaalin, on the east bank were the trusty Abdul Azim and other Abadah sheiks. The Intelligence department, astutely managed by Colonel Wingate, C.B., D.S.O., and ably assisted by Slatin Pasha, the

best-versed European in all pertaining to the dervishes, had its spies everywhere. Even in the Khalifa's camp Colonel Wingate had his men, and wavering Mahdist sheiks and others were in constant communication with him. It may be that the circumstances somewhat lent themselves to favouring Colonel Wingate's work, but never was a General so thoroughly well served by an Intelligence department as that run

SLATIN PASHA, AT WADY HALFA.

for the Sirdar by the officers named. Information was gleaned from all quarters—weighed, tabulated, and put into such form as to be easily and quickly available upon all points. On the 1st day of January 1898 the Khedival gunboats, detailed to regularly patrol the river south of Dakala, proceeded beyond Shendy and Metemneh, shelling both the dervish towns in passing. The dervishes, as before, had constructed lines of trenches along the river's margin, and

erected eight small square mud forts, each of which contained one brass 9-pounder rifled howitzer. With fire from the ships' 12- and 6-pounder guns these works were knocked about, whilst the Maxim machine guns kept the enemy's riflemen reasonably quiet. The gunboats — they are so only in name, being merely small stern-wheelers, fitted with thin steel bullet-proof shields—had many narrow escapes then and in subsequent bombardments, in running the gauntlet of the Khalifa's batteries. On the occasion in question one man was killed by the explosion of a dervish shell on board the *Nazir*. The flotilla, however, captured four sailing cargo-boats, used by the enemy in carrying supplies down from Omdurman. On the 4th of January the advance of the Lincolnshire regiment quitted Cairo for the front, the others already named following later during the same week. At the same time, the Seaforth Highlanders were intercepted at sea and ordered to Alexandria, preparatory to being sent to join the rest. The whole British force was placed under the command of Major-General Gatacre, an experienced Indian fighter. Nor was this all: skilled British officers were detached for special service in Egypt, and hurried out to take appointments upon the Sirdar's staff and in the Khedival Soudanese battalions; whilst fresh troops were despatched to replace those withdrawn from the force in occupation. It is said that cavalry and artillery were offered the Sirdar, but that he declined to have them owing to the difficulty there would be in supplying forage for the horses. A number of gunners, non-commissioned

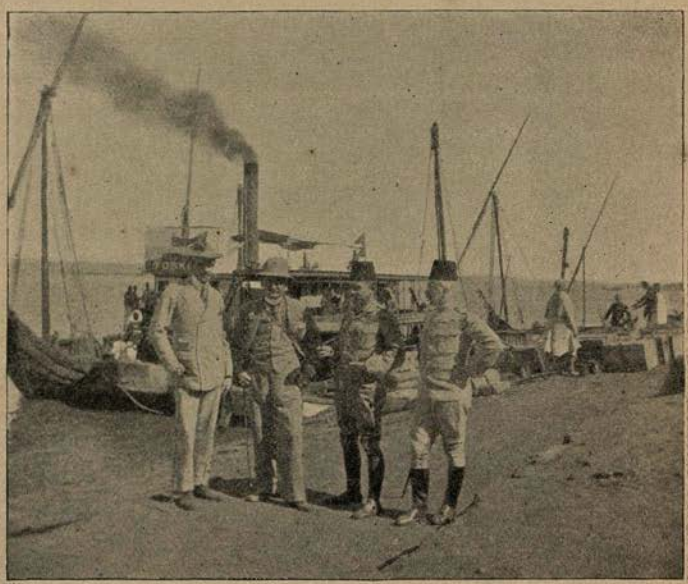
officers, Royal Engineers, and a detachment of the Army Medical Staff Corps were among other details of troops sent forward.

I hastened back to Egypt in January, having spent but a few days in England. Some few days I had, perforce, to linger in Cairo, to obtain the requisite military authorisation to go south of Assouan. It seemed that things were out of joint when, although Greeks, Italians, and other foreigners engaged in trading or in running canteens, might wander almost unquestioned to Wady Halfa, Abu Hamed, Berber, and Dakala, or lead caravans to and from Suakim, a British-born subject had no such large liberties. Ultimately I obtained my papers and started south, having as travelling companions a party of officers going to the front. Since the British occupation, every year, almost every month, has brought marked material progress in the advance of Egypt. Railroads have been built, the river traffic immeasurably increased, villages have grown into towns, and urban life has become decidedly more orderly and clean, although there is ample space for further improvement in the latter direction. The population, too, has multiplied, so that there is now north of Wady Halfa a nation of ten millions. The awful starvelings—men, women, and children—who followed the steamers in which we ploughed south in 1884, imploring bread or biscuit from the passengers and soldiers, were of the past. Better conditions apparently prevailed; the natives not only wore decent clothing, but many of them displayed taste and wealth in their choice of garments.

The scanty, unwashed waist-clout, that formerly was the sole wardrobe of the masses, had been replaced by pyjamas, shirts, and gabardines, and the whilom bare feet were slippered. Nay, more gratifying still, but that may have been due to the new and excellent police, the unceasing cry of "backsheesh" was not always heard at the river-side landing-places. Assouan had been extended, cleaned, and almost made beautiful. The railway termini there and at Shellal above the Cataract showed all the signs of much business and prosperity. Workshops had been erected, and at Shellal mechanical engineering, shipbuilding, and other industries were noisily flourishing. The river was full of craft, steam and sail, and gangs of convicts, free-limbed and in chains, felons and ex-dervishes, were transhipping piles of sleepers, rails, and stores for the front. A similar state of things—only, as one would say, colloquially, a little more so—prevailed at Wady Halfa. There, however, the stored supplies were ten times larger, and the locomotive and other works many times bigger, more important, and more substantially built.

It was at Wady Halfa, which is nearly 1000 miles up the Nile, that one got the first real glimpse of camp life and campaigning. The village of that name of 1884, with the mud huts and the mud-built fort around the umbrageous wild or sycamore fig-trees, has disappeared. In its place are several pretty bungalows, with charming, shady gardens. The roses and other flowering plants therein are perennially in full blossom, but their rich redolence is chastened with the smell of

Australian eucalyptus trees. In the largest bungalow, the Sirdar has his headquarters when in Wady Halfa. The Intelligence department and Headquarters' mess is also established there, and in an adjacent garden the Military Commandant for the time being, has his home. Hard by are the railway station, post-office,



COLONELS WINGATE AND F. RHODES WITH MAJOR DRUMMOND AT WADY HALFA.

telegraph offices, general quarters, the chief Government warehouses, officers' messes, and what not besides. A small area has been given over to æsthetics in the shape of a public square, where, under trelliswork, trees and plants have been set, and are being carefully watered. Within six months a garden was in that

way created, where previously was a waste of puffy baked desert sand. Military Wady Halfa is an oblong camp, inclosed by three high mud walls, the base being upon the Nile. The longest wall, which runs parallel with the river, but half a mile inland therefrom, is a mile in length. Within that inclosure are the Government workshop, cavalry and infantry barracks, or rather quarters, for they are only mud huts, the prisons, hospitals, canteens, and other buildings. There is room and to spare inside the lines for fifteen thousand men at a pinch. As a rule, troops are never left any length of time upon the alluvial soil of Halfa, but are sent on promptly to a more purely desert site to encamp. We correspondents put up our tents within the camp, though, for the most part, we found it preferable to live under a thatched roof in a mud-built house. The other Halfas have divided themselves. Most of the natives, since the 1896 choleraic visitation, when many huts were, for sanitary reasons, destroyed, have betaken themselves about one mile to the south, where there is a succession of villages, with a population numbering several thousands. The Wady Halfa of commerce, however, is a mile and a half to the north of the camp, and is known locally as Tewfikieh, being named after the father of the present Khedive. Tewfikieh is a place of considerable importance already, with three long streets, crammed with shops, doing a big trade in all sorts of commodities. It has a fine stone mosque, a hotel or two of sorts, and many Greek cafés, wherein can be bought all sorts of fiery "named" liquors, most of

which are drawn from the same vat! Tewfikieh probably contains a population of ten thousand souls; but I doubt not, that with peace and the settlement of the up-river provinces, its population will be trebled in a decade.

CHAPTER VII.

TRAVELLING TO RAIL-HEAD.—WITH THE BRITISH TROOPS, OR GATACRE'S BRIGADE.—DEKESH CAMP.

THERE were great rejoicings among the civil population at Wady Halfa when the British troops arrived. The Khedival troops, Soudanese and Fellaheen, were no less well pleased to see them, and to have them for comrades in arms. Everybody felt assured that if the dervishes came on, as was bruited it was their intention, they would get all the fighting they wanted. That they could harry and overrun the province of Berber was soon regarded as beyond their power. There were rare scenes by the side of the Nile within the camp confines, as steamer after steamer arrived towing barges, which, with the stern-wheelers themselves, were laden with British "Tommies" and their kits. Each stern-wheeler, with a barge lashed on either side, carried half a battalion. Khedival regimental bands met the incoming troops, and played them to their assigned quarters. The headquarters staff, too, was represented on these occasions, and there was no mistaking the heartiness, on all sides, of the welcome given to the Queen's troops. Very early in January the Wady-Halfa-Berber railway had been

carried seventeen miles beyond Abu Hamed. The first detachment of the Lincolns got to rail-head, and went into camp on the 13th of January. On the following day the 4th Egyptian battalion, under Major Sparkes, which had marched up from Suakim, arrived in Berber. Reports kept coming in continually that the dervishes were massing their forces at Metemneh. As nearly all their sailing craft had been captured or sunk, for the Sirdar held possession of the river with his gunboats, it was not thought that they could do much beyond moving north along the already devastated left or west bank of the Nile. Still, for no clearly assignable reason beyond the hurried moving up of soldiers, there was a feeling abroad anticipatory of conflict. An almost electrical state of excitement prevailed. At that period a few dervishes crossed from the west to the east bank of the Nile, and raided the wretchedly poor village of Kunur, south of Berber. The raiders were made to smart for their temerity, and thereafter things quieted down for a little while. Possibly the dervishes got an inkling of the reception that was being prepared for them, and began to act more warily. Before the end of January the British brigade, which was in March augmented by the Seaforth Highlanders, had arrived at rail-head; and Major-General Gatacre, who had hurried out from England to assume command of it, had joined them. The strength of the brigade as a fighting force was materially increased by the possession of six Maxims.

My chief anxiety during my stay at Wady Halfa was to secure servants, transport animals, and

permission to proceed to rail-head. Our servants and ourselves were to be given a lift by train on payment, for the Sirdar works everything on strict business principles. By that means he has conducted the cheapest campaigns that have ever been put through in the Soudan, or, for the matter of that, anywhere else. As places were not to be found for our horses, camels, and extra stores upon the trains, even for payment, the animals, accompanied by their attendants, had to march across the 232 miles of desert from Wady Halfa to Abu Hamed, and thence on to rail-head. One further courtesy and kindness was granted us: the horses were allowed to water *en route* at the railway stations, which were about twenty-five miles apart. At that time the railroad was being worked to its fullest capacity, and sleepers and rails for the extension, as well as provisions for the troops, and forage for the cavalry and camelry, daily overtaxed the train service. We had no right nor desire to complain because our transport animals and horses had to march the whole way. Just prior to my going to Abu Hamed and rail-head, there was a fresh flutter of excitement about the dervishes raiding across from Omdurman and Es Safiyeh into the Dongola province. Camp shaves, *i.e.* yarns, are oft fearful and wondrous efforts of the imagination. I was offered a ride and transport to Dongola, Korti, or Merawi, but I decided that the contingency of fighting in that direction was too remote to be worth while going. So I adhered to my original plan, and went instead towards rail-head and the British camp. The new line even then boasted the

possession of two comfortable passenger carriages, besides passable brake-vans. On the switch-back riverian tracks we rarely even aspired to rickety brake-vans, but were content to travel by day and night on rough open trucks, and get unstintedly shaken up, and sometimes dumped on the desert. By day the sun grilled us, and by night we were oftentimes pinched with cold; but we had to hold on as best we could, all the same. I made my first trip to Abu Hamed and to Dekesh camp, about eighteen miles beyond, in a plain but cosy "saloon" carriage, which was provided with cane-frame folding-beds. On my subsequent journeys back and forward, I was equally fortunate in finding passable carriages. The Sirdar, who was necessarily a great railway traveller, sometimes made the journey to the front and back, 530 miles at that date, in less than forty hours.

A railway laid upon the sea—and such a thing has been soberly proposed—an iron line built across the awful furrowed chaos of the moon's surface, would be relatively little greater achievements than this new Soudan military railway. Running straight into the bare, unredeemed, and totally barren desert that lies betwixt Wady Halfa and Abu Hamed for 230 miles, the line passes from the Nile to the Nile. This new railway, as I have elsewhere said, has entirely changed the whole situation in the Soudan, and brought the re-occupation of Khartoum within easy and measurable distance. The interminable wastes, the terrible and apparently never-ending marches which baffled alike the attempts of Cambyses and of many later

would-be conquerors of Kordofan and Central Africa, are all overcome. How the troops in the 1884-5 Gordon relief expedition heroically toiled and fought, history may do partial justice to. Their endurance and courage certainly paralleled the best deeds of classic story. Even in those 1884-5 days how different the result might have been! It is beyond question that Gordon would have been saved and Khartoum relieved if the Government of the period had but wisely read the reports made to them, and listened with an open mind to the proposals put forward for that purpose by the then Commander of the British forces in Egypt, Major-General Stephenson. That gentleman has a book containing copies of letters and telegrams which passed between the authorities in London and his headquarters that ought to see the light some day, if only to show how, on so-called economical grounds, a British Ministry dallied with Gordon's and the garrisons' fates in the balance, plus the total surrender of the Soudan to as savage anarchy as the world has known.

To revert to the subject of the Wady Halfa and Abu Hamed military railway, carried across a trackless, waterless desert. The whole thing falls little short of the astounding in conception, as well as of the "utmost daring" in execution. Many of the bygone blunders of the 1884-5 campaigns are in a measure redeemed by the genius of the work. Although as early as 1883 it was predicted that the effectual way to ensure the possession and peace of the Soudan was by building railroads to reach the Upper Nile, still it

remained for Major-General Sir Herbert Kitchener to insist on the construction of the Wady-Halfa Abu-Hamed line. It would be an act of the grossest meanness to deny him the credit for carrying through the iron road which simplified the situation in so thorough a fashion. How different 1898 from 1884-5! When the 1896 campaign was closed, with the occupation of Dongola and Merawi, the Nile Valley

ARRIVAL OF "THE CAMERONS" AT WADY HALFA.

railway, that began at Wady Halfa, ended "nowhere in particular." Its terminus at that period was beyond Kosheh, upon the Mograkeh Desert. The line was subsequently carried towards "nowhere," or Kerma, which is much the same thing for all practical purposes, or for tapping a district unlikely to yield through traffic for many years to come. However, it served a purpose, as it enabled stores to be sent rapidly to Kerma, whence they were distributed by

boat among the troops echeloned along the river up to Merawi. The further active prosecution of the Nile Valley railway beyond Kerma was promptly abandoned by the Sirdar, who called for means and material to build the desert line from Halfa to Abu Hamed. He, at least, had no illusions about the vaunted Nile Valley railway. It was a bold stroke to throw it over and demand a new line. His insistence conquered the civil authorities. Perhaps the resolution to drop the riverian route, and accept the projected railway striking directly across the sterile desert from Wady Halfa to Abu Hamed, instead of starting towards that point from Kerma, was rendered the easier to adopt when it was shown that the later survey disclosed numberless difficulties in rock-cutting and grading compared with the former. Besides, the respective lengths of lines needed to make connection were much the same. So it fell out that the Sirdar had his own way. A waterless desert lay in front, but, given prudence and unremitting labour, it was held that the 232 miles could be quickly and successfully laid. Both the Sirdar controlled. The Egyptian railway battalion was fully 2000 strong, and in addition any number of stout, diligent natives were always procurable at Sir Herbert Kitchener's beck and call. With a will stiffened by so definite a purpose, he grimly ordered and pressed forward the enterprise. Happily, he was assisted by an exceptionally able staff of young officers, led by Captain Girouard, R.E., who had learned something of the way of laying down railways against time in America.

The grading offered no serious impediment, and such delays in construction as occurred were due to want of material. Still, in spite of everything, the line was laid at the high average of one mile and a half a day from the date of starting. From end to end there is neither a bridge nor a culvert, though by and by a few such structures will be put in to replace embankments that are liable to be washed away when there is such a blessed thing as a visitation of rain.

The work had all to be done from the Wady Halfa end. As the line proceeded, the daily water-tanks train to supply the men and the engines grew bigger and bigger. It being a single-track railway, nominal stations, for the conveniences of having sidings and for taking water, were established at convenient distances apart. The track is mostly straight, curving only here and there to avoid a hillock or mound. On the whole, the line is well laid. For the most part the road-bed has been put down on a low bank of packed sand, there being few cuttings. The rails are of English steel, and at the highest speed of twenty-five miles an hour the carriages run as smoothly as the London and North-Western expresses. The country over which the line passes is mainly undulating desert, with outcrops of rotten sandstone, quartz, slate, and grey granite. Nearing Abu Hamed, low detached hills are seen to the north, east, and south. For seventy-five miles out, no water could be found by sinking ordinary wells. Close to the seventy-fifth mile siding there are a few scrub, mimosa, and clumps of reedy grass. A big well was sunk alongside the

line to a depth of sixty feet, down to the clay, when a small supply of water was found, barely enough to furnish a full daily supply for two or three tenders. From the seventy-fifth mile-post to the hundredth, the line climbs until it reaches its greatest elevation, namely, 1600 feet. The up-grade is achieved so regularly that it is scarcely noticeable to passengers. At the summit the temperature is decidedly cool, and in the winter season warm clothing is comforting, and not, as usual in the Soudan, a sad inconvenience. Some day, perhaps, a sanatorium may crown the spot, where invalids will breathe an atmosphere at once dry and pure beyond the ocean breeze. At the southern foot of the summit station, twenty-five miles away, another well has been sunk to a depth of seventy feet. There also a small supply of water is procured for the locomotives.

Dekesh camp, where I found the three battalions then forming Major-General Gatacre's brigade, borrowed its name from an adjacent so-called village. The native quarters comprised a few dilapidated mud huts. Upon the strip of deep and yellow desert sand, interspersed with patches of light loam, pebbles, and schist, 'twixt the railroad and the river, the Camerons, Lincolns, and Warwicks were encamped. There were tents, but the men's lines by day were best marked by the rows of piled arms. The Nile was about three-quarters of a mile from the railway. A few regimental canteens, under canvas, had been set up by the railway, and nearer the river the hospital, kitchens, and bakery. The appearance of

the soldiers, officers, and men would scarcely have been considered respectable in England, either for barrack parade, or returning from Aldershot field manœuvres. They were living, be it remembered, in the open, lying upon the bare ground; and what with the eager wind and the tramping of many feet, the thin dust hung about as a cloud, making grimy the

MAJOR-GENERAL GATACRE, C.B.

men and spoiling their clothes. Nor Nile nor soap enabled anyone to keep clean more than a few minutes. Although a stern disciplinarian, Major-General Gatacre was popular with the soldiers. He had a constant eye to the satisfying of all their reasonable wants, but he did not spare them nor did he allow anyone to shirk duty,—himself less than anybody. I have known him again

and again ride and walk eighty to ninety miles a day, when camps were being changed, to assure himself by personal inspection that the men were all right and everything as it should be. Of middle life, he is yet thin and active, and rather above the medium height.

Under Major-General Gatacre's leadership, Mr Tommy Atkins had much real soldierly training. Reveille was at 5.15 a.m., when, to ensure that everybody was thoroughly awakened, after a fanfare of bugles, the bands discoursed sounds consisting of flute solos and all the drums in strength. The nights were cold to bitterness, in the morning air, and the vigorous whanging those drums got, almost perceptibly increased the temperature. My tent was pitched opposite the main guard near the Lincolns' lines. It was not enough that the sentries hoarsely challenged passers, apparently every half-minute all night. For want of further diversion, outpost called to outpost, to make sure that each sentinel was on the alert. And, worse luck still, my neighbours beat around camp with that flute solo and massed drums entertainment, their excruciating, brain-racking favourite tune, "Old man Barry." As far as my bewildered senses could make out, it was a sort of medley of the "Dead March" and the "Deil Amang the Tailors." It served its purpose admirably, however, arousing everybody. Half-an-hour later, the men having had a snack of biscuit or bread, were not only on parade, but setting out for a route march of thirteen miles, or a morning's hard work at field exercises or manœuvres. Their

daily round was one of drill and duty, for the General arranged plenty of work for the men, such as wood-cutting parties, guards and outposts, besides the regular marches and hours devoted to lively mimic war operations and sturrying over the desert. A good deal of time was given to learning a new attack formation which he devised for dealing with dervishes and like gentry, and which was put in practice later on at the Atbara. At night "first post" was at 7.30. By 8.15 p.m. all lights had to be out and everybody abed. Tommy spread his blanket upon the pebbles or desert sand, lying down fully dressed, boots and all, ready to spring to arms. Officers as well as men had to go to sleep with their clothes on, although there was no enemy near.

Naturally, there was some grumbling at what was held by a few to be unnecessary hardship. In the beginning there were several attempts to sleep without boots and with tunics off, but various ordered night alarms, requiring instant assemblage in ranks, disclosed the shirkers hopping to their stations in their stocking feet, and parading in their shirt sleeves. Brought under their leader's eye in that guise, these little delinquencies were soon cured. In fact, Major-General Gatacre is one of those military leaders who does not believe in playing at soldiers, but in thoroughly accustoming his men to the conditions under which real war has to be made. Surely the General was justified by the result, for a healthier, better set-up, and smarter body of soldiers were not to be found anywhere, upon barrack square, parade, or in the field, the world over.

They marched for hours without showing the slightest signs of fatigue, and doubled over rough ground like trained athletes. Their appetites, like their physique, were wonderfully hardy. It was really a gladsome sight to see the brawny, bare-legged Cameron Highlanders, the tough Warwicks, and the tall, broad-shouldered men of the East Coast—the Lincolns—striding over the desert with all the freedom of movement of the Arabs and the thews of Britons. I certainly never before saw such highly-trained men in any of the many Soudan campaigns. Yet the daily routine of arduous duties did not exhaust them, for in the afternoons footballs were flying about the camps. Of sickness there was practically none. The average was far below home-station rates. Indeed, the brigade had fewer men in hospital than the two companies of the Warwicks had who were quartered in the Dongola province. As for good conduct, it was all that could be wished. I may add that, so far, the men have had neither beer nor rum rations issued to them, nor did the few articles offered for sale at stiff prices in their canteens include strong liquor of any kind. "Drink," except water and "minerals," was proscribed. As things were, as a braw piper remarked:—"This is a maist uncommon experience, and yet we can blaw weel eneuch still. Laud, mon! I have been in places, e'en in England among the Sassenach, where I could get fou nicht after nicht, if I had liked, without its costing me a bawbee. But ne'er a drap here."

The Sirdar, as well as Major-General Gatacre, set his face like flint against the issuance of beer to

the British troops. It had been shown again and again that a beer ration in the Soudan had ruinous effects upon the men's healths and *morale*. Canteen keepers, Greeks, and all traders were warned and forbidden to sell strong drink of any kind to the men. In pursuance of that policy, one firm of brewers had hundreds of barrels shipped back at their own expense from Wady Halfa to Lower Egypt, whilst in Berber, later on, Greeks and others, who had smuggled wine and spirituous compounds into camp, had the liquor seized and poured out upon the insatiable desert sand. "An awfu' waste o' guid drink," as I overheard several woful-eyed Tommies say.

The War Office authorities have reams of correspondence on the valueless character of the Lee-Metford rifle bullet. Indeed, the rifle itself has come in for severe strictures, as being inferior in its magazine arrangement to the German and Italian weapons; whilst the cordite is described as "an indifferent explosive compared to the powder of other countries." However all that may be, certainly the soldiers have no faith in the stopping qualities of the Lee-Metford bullet. Under superior orders, issued at Dekesh camp, large details from each regiment were engaged daily in filing off the tips of the Lee-Metford bullet. One million rounds had to be so dealt with. They were doing the same thing in Cairo arsenal. It is little short of a scandal that an army in the field has to sit down whilst the men re-make its ammunition. A bullet is put into a rifle to do certain work, and if it does not do so effectually, it is a failure, as the

bullet in question is, in the opinion of most men who have seen it fired in warfare. A million is a big number. The tips were filed down till the lead showed through the nickel case. A bullet so treated expands mushroom fashion upon striking any object, and becomes a veritable "stopper."

To discuss a more congenial matter — Tommy's meals. He usually has a 'grand appetite' when campaigning. On active service the Government ration allowed him comprises (inclusively) — bread 1¼ lb., meat 1¼ lb., tea ½ ounce, sugar 2½ ounces, salt ½ ounce, rice ½ ounce, pepper $\frac{1}{36}$th ounce, fresh vegetables ½ lb., or in lieu of latter, 3 ounces onions, daily. That was what he got at Dekesh. For fresh vegetables he received onions 3 ounces. In addition he could purchase, by payment out of his own pocket, one-third more of each article. As a matter of fact, he constantly bought food, a grateful country not even giving its troops in the field sufficiently varied diet. Nowadays the commonest folk at home look for something more than plain bread and tough meat. The meat ration issued was poor, and ran largely to bone —¼ lb. of meat to 1 lb. of bone. In the regimental canteens, cheese, tinned milk, jams, sardines, bacon, tinned fruits, tea, coffee, date pudding, soup, etc., were sold in large quantities to the men. Were a smart contractor to take up the job, the War Office and the country might, on those lines, succeed in making campaigns pay for themselves. I commend the suggestion to them. At any rate, they would recover every farthing of the soldier's pay, and a trifle over. Is not

the thing worth the attention of some enthusiastic economists? All that is needed is to maintain the supplies in the canteens. Seriously, is the business creditable to us? The Soudan prices charged the mess were—for a pint of very ordinary soup 2½d., a hunk of date pudding 1½d., and a glass of natural lemonade, made with powders, 1d. There was a big business done in all these in the canteens. "Tommy" has as much right to save up pay as anybody, and should be encouraged to do so. Then there was his tobacco to be bought, and, worse still, new boots, for those sent from England were trodden to tatters within two weeks. Campaigning is hard upon clothes and boots, and all extras as yet come out of the men's thin purses. I wonder if public sentiment in England is ripe for doing what the people did during the American Civil War for the men in the field? Committees were formed, commissions appointed, and these volunteer organisations took care to supplement the soldiers' bare tables with a few extras, such as milk, coffee, bread, butter, etc., and provide extra clothing and boots in needful cases. There is no reason why the many charitably-disposed at home should not thus minister to the wants of their soldiers fighting the country's battles, risking limb and life.

There is one easy way by which everybody can contribute to the men's happiness and lighten the soldier's life in the field—it is by forwarding, to the care of the chaplains, newspapers, magazines, or old novels.

CHAPTER VIII.

Changing Camp.—Forward to Abu Dis.—The Sirdar's Forces.

Military camps have all a strong family resemblance to each other. The surroundings may be, and often are, totally dissimilar, but within the lines, to speak plainly, they are "much of a muchness." With the extension of the railway south of Dekesh, it became necessary to shift camp. It is usually a good thing to change camp with discreet frequency, and that for several reasons. Removal is beneficial on sanitary grounds, and also because it gives the men something to do and think about, and prevents them growing lumpish. Those were days of strain for the railway gangs-men. On more than one occasion they laid down two miles of track within twenty-four hours. It was early in February that Gatacre's brigade received orders to move forward about eighteen miles to a place called Abu Dis. The British troops had been kept at rail-head because it was more convenient to feed them there than at Berber or Dakala, on the Atbara. Besides, at rail-head they were a sure protection to the workmen employed building the line. The Egyptian and Soudanese troops, cavalry, artillery, and

two brigades of infantry, viz., Macdonald's and Lewis's, then extended between Dakala and Berber, were quite capable of holding the position against any raiding force of the enemy. In any event, Gatacre's brigade, with Colonel Maxwell's brigade of Egyptian troops, then encamped near the British, could have been sent up to the front before the dervishes could have reached the Atbara from Metemneh. A small advance party of Gatacre's soldiers started to march from Dekesh to Abu Dis on the 12th of February, to prepare and hold the new camp. By arrangement, the tents and heavy baggage were forwarded by rail. Among the weighty articles was soda-water machinery plant, belonging to a Greek named Loisa, who, as a Government contractor, has been in many Soudan campaigns. Aerated waters in Africa are wholesome, refreshing, and nigh indispensable. Though costly as a beverage, compared with European prices, and rather indifferent in quality, yet enormous quantities were consumed daily, the desert being a terrible thirst-creator. Nile water, precipitated with alum or beans, or roughly filtered, was aerated by ordinary process. One feature of the soda-water business was, that you had to bring your own bottles and corks, so there was often rare hunting around camp kitchens for old bottles and second-hand corks.

Apart from the railway workmen's battalion, the officers and crews of the seven gunboats, the camel transport, or 'Hamla,' under Lieutenant-Colonel Kitchener, the actual combatant force employed by the Sirdar in the Atbara campaign comprised four bat-

teries, eight squadrons, four infantry brigades, ten Maxims, a detachment of engineers, and two companies of camelry,—in all, under 14,000 men. To these might, however, be added the camel transport, for the men were armed with Remingtons, and showed capacity, more than once, to defend themselves against dervish attacks, and the native auxiliaries and friendlies, thus increasing the total by 2000. The artillery, under Lieutenant-Colonel Long, R.A., included two batteries, respectively horse and mule, of Krupp guns, and two batteries of 15-pounder Maxim-Nordenfeldt automatic guns. The latter were short breech-loading weapons, really howitzers, fitted with recoil bearings. Though they had no great range, it was enough. Firing a double shell with fair accuracy, they proved themselves most serviceable cannon. The eight squadrons of cavalry were commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel Broadwood, an experienced soldier, who had under him half a score of British officers. For fighting purposes the Maxims were distributed among the cavalry and the infantry. Major-General Gatacre's brigade ultimately included the Lincolnshire, Warwickshire, the Cameron and Seaforth Highlanders battalions. The Khedival infantry were Colonel Maxwell's brigade—the 8th battalion Egyptian, 12th battalion Soudanese, 13th battalion Soudanese, and 14th battalion Soudanese; Lieutenant-Colonel Macdonald's brigade—2nd battalion Egyptian, 9th battalion, 10th battalion, and 11th battalion Soudanese; Lieutenant-Colonel Lewis's brigade—3rd battalion, 4th battalion, 7th battalion,

and 15th battalion of Egyptians. Surgeon-Colonel Gallwey was the principal medical officer of the Khedival force.

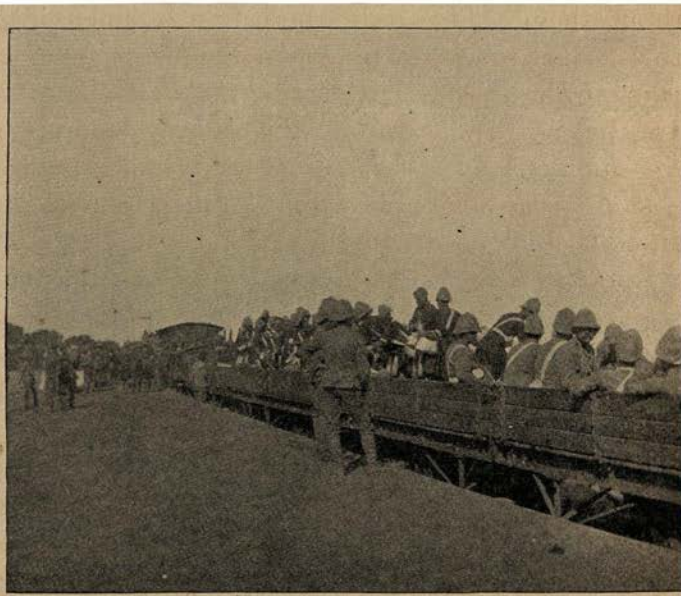
In breaking camp, Major-General Gatacre took care that a detachment of cooks were sent forward some ten miles to a place called Gigi. There, when his soldiers subsequently arrived, they halted for a short time and had a meal, bread and hot soup being issued to the men. The soldiers were marched during the night, when the air was cool, the General himself always accompanying his men. Great care was exhibited in choosing the new camp at Abu Dis. Surgeon-Major Macnamara, in the first instance, proceeded there with General Gatacre and staff, to see that proper sanitary conditions were secured. By such constant prevision the health of the British troops was maintained at a higher standard than at any home station. True, there were none but picked and sound men in Gatacre's brigade, and the average age was greater than to be found ordinarily in our army. Still, the Soudan is an extremely trying climate. The first large advance party, which was sent to take over and prepare the camp, started from Dekesh at 2 a.m. Sturdily tramping across the bare desert, they covered the distance to Abu Dis in under six hours of actual marching time. The Camerons and Lincolns afterwards established the record of $5\frac{1}{2}$ hours, few or none of the men falling out by the way on that occasion.

Fate or custom seems to decree that in the Soudan all important events shall begin on Sundays or holydays. It was on Sunday, midday, that the tents of the

Camerons and Lincolns were struck at Dekesh, and houseless they hung about until the hour to march came round. The Warwickshire regiment was left behind as a rear-guard for two days. Abu Dis was a prettier camping site than Dekesh. The Nile was nearer—the channel was full of rocky islets, and in the river's wide course was a well-wooded fertile island. 'Ghizerehs' or islands, of all shapes, sizes, and degrees of barrenness and fertility, is one of the most charming characteristics of Upper-Nile scenery. At Abu Dis the river-banks were loftier than at Dekesh; and for the undulating gravel and sand knolls of the latter, there were, in lieu, yellow hillocks or sand dunes. Though the marginal strip of loam by the river was very narrow, yet were there more brush and trees at Abu Dis—a great convenience in camp, where firewood is always needed. The bunchy-topped dhoum palms, too, were more plentiful, growing singly and in clumps. Although useless for fuel, they give relief to the eyes and afford a little shade. In campaigning, as I have previously observed, the worry of preparation is more trying than the shock of attack. Yet never had I seen finer troops than the men of Gatacre's brigade. They were in the pink of condition. Often as I watched them did I regret that Lord Wolseley had not sent just such a brigade across the Bayuda desert in 1884-5. Had they been there, Abu Klea and Abu Krou had been easier won battles, and mayhap the terrible years of Soudan campaigns and measureless suffering had never been.

No other European troops could have done better

or smarter work than Gatacre's brigade in changing camp. The tents of the Camerons and Lincolns were struck in ten minutes or so. A little later a train of 'empties' came along, and the baggage was within half-an-hour put upon the waggons by the soldiers. Talk of the toiling Fellah, or 'Gippy'! why, Tommy



BRITISH TROOPS ON THE DESERT RAILWAY—FOR THE FRONT.

Atkins, in his shirt-sleeves, kilted or breeched, gripped and threw the stores and camp material upon the waggons, and stowed it in so quick a style, that the natives actually stared. It has been too commonly held that native labour is indispensable if British troops are to be used in the Soudan. Thanks to Mr Atkins, that illusion has been dispelled from many

minds which should have known better. Yes; and his cheery exhibition of British vigour has done still more, for it has furnished an excellent object-lesson to all and sundry—Egyptians and Arabs in particular, who had flattered themselves with the notion that their services were indispensable—that, if needs be, we can manage without them. The train thereafter steamed away, with a small guard seated upon the baggage in the trucks, towards Abu Dis.

In the Soudan, nearly all the railway stations are mere numerals. Nos. 1 to 10, for instance, indicate the stages of the journey from Wady Halfa to Abu Hamed. Beyond these the stations—so called, for they merely boast a tent or two, a little coal-heap for the engines, with sometimes a watering-tank for the locomotives—are usually named after the nearest river-side village, rock, cataract, or native ferry-crossing. By the way, the locomotives are shockingly thirsty things. The ordinary mortal has no idea that they consume many thousands of gallons of water in the course of a single day's journey. Each train that leaves Wady Halfa for Abu Hamed and rail-head carries not only about 5000 gallons in the tender, but has a contiguous connecting supply many times greater. These supplementary reservoirs, so to speak, are placed in five huge iron tanks, which are carried upon an equal number of railway trucks, coupled up behind the tender.

The Camerons and Lincolns, without tents, and with only an extra blanket to protect them from the extreme cold which prevailed between sunset and

sunrise, prepared to bivouac upon the bare desert until 2 a.m. at Dekesh. As ill-luck would have it, they had to endure the discomfort and buffeting of a fierce dust-storm, which for a fortnight had been raging through all the hours. Raised by the cold persistent north wind, the sand and dust whirled by in a thick cloud, making the atmosphere almost as opaque as a London fog of medium density. Occasionally, even at noontide, the air was so laden that it was impossible to see objects farther off than fifty yards. We had much the same experience returning from Abu Klea in 1885, but in those days the wind and dust ceased to trouble after 10 a.m. Up in the Berber region everybody was powdered with fine grit from head to foot, and everything was coated with sand. It is wonderful what power the desert possesses for assimilating all things, and how quickly it changes the form and hue of extraneous objects. Even the pyramids at Merawi, Abu Doom, and Shendy, through the course of years, have come to look like ordinary natural landmarks. The desert dust has the trick, like the invisible ether, of permeating everywhere, through clothes, boots, and watch-cases, and sometimes I fancied it got into our tinned provisions; but in that last instance it might have been owing to the strange methods adopted by our native servants in dealing with these indispensable commodities before setting them before us. Fortunately, neither at Dekesh nor Abu Dis was the soil more than ordinarily grimy, and so the skin got coated with layers of gritty dust, one appearing rather travel-stained than downright sooty black, as was the case

in subsequent camps. The biting wind and grinding sand, however, were trying to the human skin and flesh, so in a prize contest for 'the best-groomed lot of men' Gatacre's brigade would have ranked nowhere.

At sunset the Camerons and Lincolns were marched down to the river, where water-bottles were filled. The Nile, though low, is in the winter season relatively pure. It is quite as clean and much the same colour as the Thames at Chelsea Bridge. Retracing their steps a short distance, the troops were halted among the sandy hillocks which at Dekesh overlaid the trap rocks and formed the river's banks. Snuggled in their blankets among the dunes, the troops secured some shelter from the wind, turning in to sleep at 8 p.m. Reveille was sounded about 2 a.m., and a kind of breakfast was got ready and eaten. At 2.30 a.m., led by General Gatacre, the two battalions set out in the dim light to march to the new encampment, a mile and a half beyond Abu Dis village. Nearly all the officers walked, including burly Colonel Verner of the Lincolns, who, as usual, strode in front of his men. In my opinion, eighteen miles of desert-marching is no mean performance for an unhampered civilian, much less a soldier with the weight of his accoutrements to carry. Whether it be over pebbles or loose sand, the foot descends upon yielding ground, making marching a downright toil. To form a correct judgment of what it means, one should try walking along a strip of shingle or beach at home. I had rather do three miles any day upon a macadam than

trudge across a mile of trackless desert. The dust was flying thickly when the men were halted upon the scene of their new camp, piled arms, laid aside their trappings, and set to pitching their tents again. Within half-an-hour Abu Dis camp was complete—a town of two big rectangular blocks of canvas tents, divided by avenues or streets. Dinner was soon afterwards served, but not before 'details' had unloaded trains and helped to carry and unpack the baggage and stores. Then the soldiers went to work to make their own quarters as comfortable as possible, with sand and pebbles for flooring, and mattresses. In their turn, the 1st Warwickshire had to undergo a similar experience.

A period of relative tranquillity was anticipated when Gatacre's brigade settled down in Abu Dis camp. It was believed that they would be allowed to remain there until the railroad had been carried forward thirty miles to Neddi, from which at that season the Nile, with one short porterage, was navigable to Berber. The troops could then have been sent through, at a pinch, in a single day to Berber. Osman Digna alone was reported to be on the war-path upon the east bank, with a few dervish cavalry. Emir Mahmoud at Shendy was showing no signs of agressiveness—so said the spies. Yet that dervish chief had been cunningly preparing for his great movement. He had decided to evacuate Metemneh, and cross over with all his force to Shendy, a few miles farther north upon the right bank. Gradually he strengthened the Shendy garrison, getting his men and provisions

over in spite of visitations from the Egyptian gunboats, led by Commander Keppel, R.N. By day when possible, and by night, Mahmoud wrought at ferrying his army of 20,000 horse and infantry across the spacious Nile. One or two native craft, 'giasses,' that had been sunk to secure them from capture, were raised. With these, and by means of rafts made of skins and palm logs, the dervishes were slowly massed, horse and foot, in Shendy. With what they looted from the local natives and got from the Khalifa at Omdurman, Mahmoud and his men had ample provisions, guns, ammunition, and thousands of camels and donkeys for transport use. It was quite well known that he had ten cannon, and at least ten thousand rifles, besides spearsmen and swordsmen. About the 19th of February, it was learned in Gatacre's camp that the dervishes at Shendy were being reinforced by troops sent direct from Omdurman, as well as by a few local levies. The movement, however, was not considered serious until the end of that month, when the dervish leader, rightly believing Dakala and Berber were only held by Egyptian troops, determined to capture both places before the Sirdar could concentrate his army.

Sir Herbert Kitchener had too many wary scouts abroad to be taken by surprise. Two of his gunboats, the *Zafir* and *Nazir*, had gone up the river to Shendy, and again interrupted Mahmoud's crossing. Although the Nile was low, and the enemy were able to cover the passage to some extent by emplacing guns at Shendy in stout mud forts, and

lining trenches dug by the river's bank with riflemen, the gunboats, with cannon and Maxims, played havoc with the dervishes. Three large sailing-boats were captured, another was sunk, and several prisoners and dervish deserters were brought in. One of the enemy's captured craft was in a bend, behind a sand-bank, and could not be approached nearer than two hundred yards by the gunboats. Whilst the steamers replied to the dervish cannon and rifle fire, keeping it well under, a company of the 15th Egyptian battalion was landed, and, marching beneath the bank, cut out the enemy's boat, and brought her off. One of the prizes contained Mahmoud's camp furniture and part of his wardrobe. Although the dervishes saw the landing-party, they were unable to rush them, owing to the heavy and accurate fire from the steamers' Maxims.

As usual, the Sirdar anticipated his opponent. Sir Herbert being at Wady Halfa, at the end of February, held counsel with Lieutenant-General Sir Francis Grenfell, who had journeyed there on a tour of inspection. That same afternoon wires were flashed in all directions, and the Seaforth Highlanders were ordered up to join General Gatacre. Meanwhile, the concentration at the front, of the Anglo-Egyptian army had already begun. Indeed, Sir Francis Grenfell had been previously informed by telegraph, sent by the Sirdar to Assouan, that the enemy were coming down, full of boasting of their power to drive the Khedival forces out of Dakala and the whole Berber province. Defences were looked to from the Atbara to Berber

town. Ninety miles intervened between Abu Dis camp and Berber. The British brigade was warned on the 25th of February to prepare to march south. Maxwell's brigade had like instruction. The intention was to send them into camp ten miles south of Berber, —that town not being a fit place, on sanitary and other grounds, to quarter troops in. Macdonald's brigade, it is true, was there; but it was composed of natives, mostly inured to the place, and well in hand. Colonel Lewis, whose brigade was quartered in Dakala, or the Atbara camp, upon the north shore, and in the angle where that river joins the Nile, naturally expected to be first attacked and had his works in order. The encampment extended to about twenty-five acres. Its defences consisted of a well-designed, heavy outer zereba, or great hedge of the cut thorny mimosa, thirty yards within which was a solid mud wall, six to eight feet high, protected in places by a ditch. Upon the flanks and face of the wall at intervals, in redoubts, were Krupp guns and Maxims. Half a mile or more outside the encampment were two octagonal forts, also built of mud with stone, and of two stories in height. They were in echelon, and each was surrounded by a zereba. On the south bank of the Atbara, in the angle, was a similar two-storied fort, with cut mimosa hedge and a deep ditch for defence. A Maxim was mounted upon the roof from which a wide view of the level lands on the east bank was had. For several hundred yards around the forts and the camp, the bush had been cut and the ground cleared, forcing whoever attacked to come into the open. Within the encampment were several

new buildings built of burned and sun-dried bricks, men's grass huts, and tents, and a wooden look-out station, fifty feet high, called, of course, the Eiffel Tower. Upon the west bank of the Nile, nearly a mile distant, and opposite Dakala, there was a strong, high, mud vallum, used as a fort, containing half a battalion of Egyptians. Later on, its custody was given into the hands of the friendly Arabs. These works were our most southern outposts upon the Nile at that time.

So it came about that, after all, the British troops made only a short stay at Abu Dis. In a word, "the fat was in the fire." War is not unlike cricket, in that the unexpected often happens. The dread Fates who preside over the mysteries, again ordered it that the chief event, so far, of the campaign, should happen 'twixt Saturday and Sunday. Tommy Atkins, when on service, has ceased to rely on a Saturday half-holiday or a Sunday of rest. Once more the tents were promptly struck and packed, to be left behind for good. Mr Atkins was ordered to start on a 100-mile march to Debeker, a village ten miles or more south of Berber. With joyous alacrity he faced his duty. Major-General Gatacre issued detailed and precise instructions about the line of march, halting stages, baggage, and so forth. Everybody was to proceed to the front in the lightest possible order, and the command was interpreted strictly, none carrying more than a few pounds weight of barest necessaries. The kits rarely included more than a shirt and pair of socks for a change, with the result that the troops

became barely presentable. From the beginning, the men's boots had been a source of worry and despair. They were never sand-proof; they may have been water-proof, although the dust worked in and out of them like smith's bellows at every foot-tread. The daily exercises had left fully half the men practically shoeless, for the soles were wont to part from the 'uppers' during the marches over the desert. All who could cobble were kept continually busy to re-shoe Gatacre's brigade. Many of the men had not even a pretence of a pair of decent boots, and discarded sets had often to be hunted out of the dust-heaps to shoe the soldiers.

With everything ready for the journey, the three battalions—Camerons, Lincolns, and Warwicks—were paraded in marching order, with emergency rations in their haversacks, their cartridge-belts crammed with ammunition, and their water-bottles full. Even the supplementary field-hospital outfit had been kept within the narrowest limits. Off the brigade marched at sunset in its approved formation, something like columns in echelon, across the desert. The pace was well maintained throughout, the men tramping over the loose sand and pebbles at a steady three miles an hour gait.

After each ten miles' going, an hour and half's halt was regularly given, during which the troops partook of food, and had an issue of hot soup and tea. The meal finished, they set out again, and before sunrise each day had completed the allotted daily number of miles. By thoughtful pre-arrangement, a partial equiv-

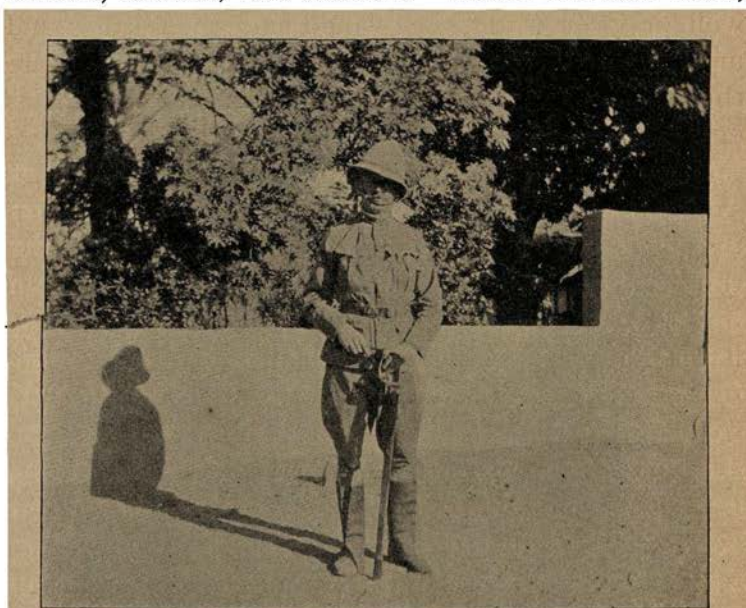
alent for rest-camps was provided beforehand at several of the stages, where fresh meat and bread were issued to the troops. Toiling sturdily, the men of the brigade covered about twenty miles a day. There were relatively few who fell out by the way, although the weather had become decidedly hot, and the dust was more choking than ever.

CHAPTER IX.

FORWARD TO THE ATBARA.—ADVANCE OF THE TWO ARMIES.

BRIEF as had been the sojourn of the British brigade at Abu Dis camp, the railroad had in the meantime been carried seventeen miles farther south. Most of the troops and all the stores were therefore sent on by train to rail-end. From there the men marched to Shereik upon the river, a place some six miles north of Neddi. Gatacre's brigade bivouacked on the night of February 25th near Shereik, which was then a forwarding station and an important post. The village was a long irregular accretion of mud huts, their repulsiveness being merged and partly hidden under stately date and dhoum palms. Shereik boasted of a 'noozle,' or commissariat depot, protected by a well-made zereba. Colonel Kitchener, the 'Mudir' as he was called, or director of transport, had his headquarters there. Upon him devolved the duty of obtaining, forwarding, and distributing all the military supplies. He had to make arrangements as best he could to keep the army well-provisioned, 'for man and beast,' as the old-fashioned inn sign-boards have it. The Sirdar followed most distinguished precedent in appointing his brother

to the position, and eminently in no fewer than three annual campaigns has Colonel Kitchener justified his relative's choice. All extra stores, other than strictly military supply issues, were forwarded, as I have previously stated, by private traders, who were mostly Greeks, Italians, and Maltese. These included food,



COLONEL KITCHENER, DIRECTOR OF TRANSPORT.

chiefly tinned articles, such as sardines, condensed milk and preserves, clothing, and, as important as anything, something to drink. Traders' supplies arrived by caravans through from Merawi, Korosko, and, last but not least, from Suakim. In fact, thanks to the reopening of the Suakim trade route, a better, cheaper, and more varied stock of things was kept in

the Berber traders' stores than in Wady Halfa. How cooling and delightful the tinned fruits were, and how wondrous comforting the sparkling mineral-waters!—I mean the much-advertised higher-grade taps, not the ordinary sodas and lemonades. Ah! if people in temperate zones only knew the vile tepidity of Soudan well or river water, they would laud the virtues and merits of civilised and bottled aerateds. There are three poignant degrees of thirst in the Soudan, as everybody soon distinguishes for himself. They are the resultants capable of determination—of hot dry air, sand, and dust. Crudely stated and in their order, these are the tongue and mouth thirst, the throat thirst, and, last and worst, the stomach or whole inwards thirst. You may quench the first, but the latter two need many internal liquid applications and rest ere they can be subdued, for the tissues become so arid, that water seems to lose its moistening power, and you are consumed with drought.

Neither extra 'fatigues' nor hard marching was ever accepted in Gatacre's brigade as an excuse for relaxing safeguards and routine duties. At Shereik outposts were established, with shallow trenches and low walls of loose stones and zerebas to protect them, and guards were ordered out as if the troops were in touch with the enemy. Next night, 26th February, at 9.30 p.m., the brigade resumed its onward march, the Camerons again leading. The road taken was the short-cut, rough desert track to Bastinab, a military station sixteen miles south, situated by the Nile. Halting during the night to eat and rest, they reached

Bastinab early next day. Beyond Bastinab, the troops followed the meandering river-side villagers' tracks. Though a longer marching line to Berber or southward than the desert short-cuts, there was the almost inestimable advantage that the men were always able to replenish their water-bottles from the Nile. Withal, the toilsome going was such that the marching began to tell upon the soldiers, many of whom suffered from painful foot-sores. Perhaps it was because of their rough woollen hose, which held the sand and let it sift inwards, that the Highlanders suffered most from raw feet, blisters, and lameness. The kharkee trousers of the Lincolns and Warwicks to some extent protected the feet of the men of those battalions. Over 200 men fell out before the rapid, arduous march of Gatacre's brigade was completed and the 'Tommies' were allowed a spell of rest at Debeker camp, south of Berber. Fortunately there were not half-a-dozen cases of heat exhaustion or sunstroke upon the journey, although two or three day marches had to be undertaken. A few officers and men lost touch of their comrades in the night at times, but these were all enabled to rejoin the brigade, and none perished by straying off alone into the desert, as had happened in previous campaigns.

To refer back a little. Among the stations passed on the way up was Abadia, a place destined to become of some importance. It was but a scrubby, native, river-side village at that date. As it is at the head of open, all-the-year-round navigation to Khartoum and south, its future is assured. The Sirdar selected

Abadia as a railway-workshops centre, and for the erection of a shipbuilding yard, where the new gunboats and barges were to be put together. Farther on, and some seven miles north of Berber, the brigade halted for several hours to pull itself together before being marched past that league of mud walls and huts. The town was justly considered to be too unclean to expose the troops to the risk of infection by marching them through its thoroughfares.

When, in the afternoon, Gatacre's brigade arrived, and passed Berber on the east side, it was accorded a magnificent reception by natives and foreigners alike. Thousands of the townsfolk, men and women, turned out to see them—an extraordinary thing for such professed indifferentists as Arabs to do. It was the first occasion that I had known of such an event in those long years of campaigns in the Soudan. Nay, the women raised their customary pea-fowl cry of welcome, and the male natives shouted in something of the fashion of a cheer. But there was no mistaking the sentiment of the blacks. They are more the children of Nature than the Arabs, and are not ashamed to shout, sing, or dance, and give full expression to their feelings. Their hearts and lungs were in their throats and mouths, and their bodies were jumping with nervous energy. Men and women alike, they rushed up and shook hands with the British soldiers as they passed, and gave them such small presents as they could afford of dates, water, onions, and tomatoes. As for the Soudanese and Egyptian troops quartered in Berber, they turned out to a man

and welcomed the brigade most loyally. There were four and a half native battalions quartered in Berber at that date. Of their own volition they gathered, lined the route, cheered and presented arms as each British battalion marched past. Their bands also went out and met the 'Tommies' without the confines of the town, and 'played' their white comrades in, through and well on the way to Debeker. The 'Berbers'—for there are three towns of that name, two being in ruins—the old, the dervish, and the existing modern city—are several miles in length, and are parallel to, but a mile or more distant from the river at low Nile. By far the cleanest and best site of the three is that of the ancient and uninhabited Berber. Taken altogether, the Berbers are but areas of mud huts and straw shelters. The old town, however, has ruins that were once ornate, and pretty buildings of good red, burned bricks. As for the modern Berber, it had the air of a gipsys' town, a habitat of tramps and mud-daubers. Great are the possibilities of cultivation upon the wide loamy plain around Berber. Dervish diabolicism has wasted its former richness. Its ancient abundance of teeming fields are now but barren wastes, and its gardens of date-palms stricken and sterile places. All that was procurable from the wretched natives who cultivated patches near the river were onions, tomatoes, marrows, melons, and beans. In an out of the way compound of a sheik's house one small fig-tree had survived neglect, and a poor orange-tree shrub showed signs of life under careful watering. Some day it will be

thought to have been a blunder to have occupied so much good loamy soil for a town, when there were clean, dry desert sand and rock a little way off, better adapted for human habitation. The Soudanese black soldiers are not churls. In welcoming the British troops, they handed little cups of coffee to the men and gave them cigarettes to smoke. Latitudinarian or eccentric as these negroes may be regarded by Christians in their marital affairs, they never omit to transmit to their wives for the time being, every penny they are allowed to send them. Indeed, if these Soudanese black soldiers had their wishes acceded to, they would remit the women and children every farthing due them by the paymasters, and all they had acquired by other means, leaving themselves absolutely penniless, such is their uxorious devotion.

On hand-shaking, the day that the British and Soudanese soldiers made each other's acquaintance at Berber, there was expended power enough to have run all the looms in Lancashire for twenty-four hours. Great, brawny blacks, Dinkas and Shilluks, grabbed with their huge palms the hands of Camerons, Lincolns, and Warwicks, and wrung them vigorously, spluttering out, meanwhile, laudatory congratulations in English and Arabic. They cheered and whooped, hurrahing loud and long for England's Queen, and then for her soldiers. There was both fervour and pathos in their welcome. It was a great red-letter day in their calendar.

I had returned from rail-head to Wady Halfa to see after my transport. Whilst there on 28th February

last, we correspondents received intimation and permission from headquarters that we might go onward to Berber. Having sent off my camels and horses by desert road, I followed with one servant by train. Two days later, at 6 a.m., I was in Shereik, having travelled 274 miles or thereby. In Shereik, we correspondents were forbidden to hire camels from natives; so the only available transport left for us to take was the small, underfed, but hardy Soudanese donkeys. The desert sand was deep and tiring, our food supplies had to be got to the front somehow, and the best procurable 'somehow' was the native 'moke,' which is an astonishingly good goer and stayer. Forty or even sixty miles a day, with an Arab upon his back, is not beyond a sturdy donkey's powers, and he will besides 'hooish' in many keys and tones to every one of his tribe he meets upon the way. An artist friend and I, after much trouble and a liberal expenditure of backsheesh, got together a sorry lot of donkeys. Only one of the bunch, as I found, could keep his legs under my weight. For these creatures' hire to Berber, a three days' journey, we had to pay at the rate of £1 each per head, about the full value of the animal under ordinary circumstances. After much noise and hours spent in squabbling over the loads, we got off with our caravan at 9.15 p.m. Striking across a track of twelve miles of very rocky desert, to cut off a bend of the river, thence trudging through a weary two miles of very deep sand, we reached a place marked on some maps as Kendesil or Bastinab, at 1.30 a.m. The pack-animals arrived an hour later. There we burrowed

upon the sand dunes until day-dawn. At 6 a.m. we were off again, walking frequently, for the narrow, high-peaked wooden saddles were very uncomfortable. During the course of that day, meeting some wandering Abadah Arabs, we succeeded in hiring two camels to convey us post-haste to Berber. My friend, more unaccustomed to antique wooden saddles and to camel-riding than I, retained an acute and lasting impression of their defects and general disagreeable character as a means of locomotion. We had a weary sixteen mile strip or more of desert to cross again, and it was not until 1 p.m. that we reached the banks of the Nile, at a point several miles south of Genenetta. Halting only long enough to bait the animals, and swallow a breakfast of bread, tinned sausages, and tea, we moved on at 3 p.m., when the heat was less intolerable. Jogging along as smartly as possible, or rather as my friend's feelings would allow of, we again left our baggage animals far behind, although their loads had been lightened by being redistributed, part being put on our riding donkeys.

The camels we had secured were equipped with the ordinary rough native baggage saddle, cross-trees, and sticks with stuffed straw-sacking for pads. My brute, I found, was strong and swift, with a long stride, whilst that ridden by my companion was also a good goer. The lively jolting of camel-riding when trotting, the cup-and-ball practice 'twixt saddle and seat, and the ever-abiding fear that these continuous acrobatic feats would land him upon the ground, and not upon his feet, from a height of three or four yards, discouraged

my friend, after a few hours vainly spent in trying to get used to the violent exercise. There was nothing for it but to put him in slings or a hammock alongside, as he declined going farther sitting upright. I converted a blanket into a hammock, and when it was burst, as by and by it was, with his greatest weight constantly falling upon one place, I narrowed its limits to those of a sack, in which he squatted. In that way we got along somehow, though, perhaps in his case, not very comfortably, until sunset, and 'last post' had gone without reaching Berber. As admission through the lines later would have been difficult, about 10.30 p.m. we turned aside into what we thought was an empty house near the dervish town of Berber. On passing through the dilapidated mud-walled gate and doorways, we entered a spacious inclosure. There we dismounted, and went into a big square apartment, almost entirely without a wall on one side. Striking a light, we found about eight Arabs lying asleep on the floor, in various attitudes. Most of them had Remington rifles, and the others had spears and swords. Remingtons, however, were commonly carried south of rail-head by the natives, with, I believe, military sanction; and, of course, the Soudanese always go about like old borderers and clansmen, armed to the teeth with knives, swords, and spears. Our guides and we saluted the inmates, and they returned our greeting quite kindly, and even helped to replenish a light fire we kindled of dhurra and maize stalks, round which they gathered, for the night was cold. Evidently they were neither robbers, of whom not a few still

infested the road at night, nor wandering dervishes. A few minutes afterwards we lay down to sleep on a raised mud bench near them, and dozed soundly till after 2 a.m.

As we slept in our clothes, and water was scarce, our toilettes were complete as soon as we awoke. Calling the men up, we saddled the animals, had something to eat and drink, an affair of three minutes—neither a city breakfast nor dinner—and so off upon the road. Before sunrise we passed through the Egyptian cavalry camp, three miles north of Berber, then through the breached mud walls of the town, and so that stage of our journey was ended. Colonel Macdonald treated us to the luxuries of the use of his bath-tub, soap, and towels, and then gave us a splendid breakfast, and later on lunch, the first good meals we had since quitting Wady Halfa. During the forenoon and afternoon we went house-hunting. Ultimately we secured a most passably clean, bare mud-house to live in. The place contained three separate rooms or huts, a kitchen, and compound, all inclosed by a mud wall, and therein, by and by, were ensconced my horses, camels, and servants, and my whole caravan. Our mansion was roomy as well as select. The surroundings, if not over pleasant, were at least open. We were not built in, cabined in dirty alley-ways, with neighbours openly dwelling upon our housetop. Our look-out, when we went to the door, was upon a very far-spreading and well-filled series of native cemeteries. From the heaped, lowly graves, adorned with little milk-white pebbles, and small, rough

head and foot stones, here and there waved, from sticks and bamboo rods, bannerets and rags, planted by the living to commemorate the newly interred. Still, we were snug, and had nothing of consequence to grumble at beyond the shocking insanitary condition of the rest of the town. There appeared to be no efficient regulations for the disposal of materials calculated to breed plague and pestilence. The old native rule and liberty of doing as you like in those matters was tolerated. As a consequence, smallpox and typhus were indigenous in Berber and all other large towns in the Soudan. The streets were full of pitfalls and holes, for, until then, anyone who wished to build a house drew his mud materials from the nearest open space. From a well, or by digging ten feet deep, he got water—foul enough it was, too—with that he stirred the mud about, used it as clay, or made it into sun-dried bricks, and built his shop or dwelling. The town was showing evidences of prosperity, for building operations, always in mud, were going on in all directions, but more especially along the very wide main thoroughfare. Shops were being opened, and there was quite a big native market held every day, where the rude articles of the Soudan were bought and sold. The Sirdar had his headquarters in an ample row of buildings surrounding a garden of several acres, studded with palm-trees. Unfortunately, there were one or two things apart from dirt, insects, and dust, that made life in Berber a burden. The post-office was three miles or so away, and had only a native clerk, who knew not English as 'she is spoke' or

'wrote.' There was, besides, a pestiferous little black fly that raised disfiguring sores, besides drawing blood.

It was difficult to credit, even as late as the middle of March, that Mahmoud really meant advancing against Dakala and Berber with his whole army. Endless stories were circulated as to the Khalifa's position and intentions. It was not an unwise act on Mahmoud's part to secure provisions, lessen desertion, and be quit of the guerilla warfare with the revolted Jaalin and Monasir tribesmen, to pass across the river and occupy Shendy in place of Metemneh, as it was apparent our advance would be along the east bank. As I wrote at that date—"Can the Khalifa and Mahmoud have taken leave of their senses? Are they deluding themselves with the notion that the Egyptian troops are of the same poor, raw quality as of 1883-4-5? Or is it that they think themselves now veteran and invincible? The Khalifa and Mahmoud have quite thrown away whatever chances they had of temporarily embarrassing the advance upon Omdurman, and possibly throwing it back for a year or two more. It is not in the power of the dervishes, I take it, to defeat the Egyptian troops, so secure are the precautions that have been taken. The Khedival forces, within their fortified lines upon the Atbara, and elsewhere, will be an invulnerable obstacle to Mahmoud's advance farther north. With the troops the Sirdar is now hurrying up to the front, Mahmoud, if he thinks better at the last moment of attacking us, may find himself assailed instead of being the assailant. What then? If all

things go as they should with the Anglo-Egyptian force, which will comprise about 17,000 of all arms, including Gatacre's brigade of English soldiers, the dervishes should suffer bitter defeat."

Such was my forecast. Mahmoud started from Shendy to come north and attack and 'annihilate' us on the 12th of March. For several days previous to that date small bands of dervishes, on rapine and murder bent, had preceded him. The very day on which he left Shendy, parties of them had arrived within twenty miles of the Atbara. Marching rapidly at first, and keeping along the river-bank, in three days his army had reached El Aliab, three-fourths of the distance from Shendy to the Atbara, and about twenty miles from Dakala. There they appeared to have halted between many opinions. In the multitude of council, the delays, which "are dangerous" in military enterprises, and not "safety," were found. They neither came on nor went back, but ultimately diverged to the east, crossing the Atbara near Nakheila to menace Berber, and turn the Sirdar's left. Sir Herbert Kitchener, however, was not the man to be turned from his purpose by any strategic manœuvring upon the part of the Khalifa or the dervish emirs.

It was at that period I made a hasty trip to see the different Anglo-Egyptian encampments between Berber and the mouth of the Atbara. To reserve my camels and horses for more pressing use, I made the upward voyage in a native boat called a 'giassa.' Nile sailing craft are of three kinds—the big and often

palatial 'dahabiehs,' the cargo-carrying 'giasses,' and the commonest, rudest of all, the 'nuggar,' a leviathan of coracles, such as might be expected from so old a civilisation as that of Egypt. Sailing, rowing, towing, and punting up the Father of Waters is a sort of voyaging I have had wide experience at, coupled with hairbreadth escapes from drowning and other exciting adventures. On that occasion, happily, all went well, for the weather, or rather the wind, was favourable, and the navigation was as easy as on the Nile north of Assouan. Between Berber and the Atbara the Nile scenery is tame, the banks being uniformly flat and uninteresting. It is a spacious river, however, full of shoals, islets, and islands. Many of the latter are miles in extent, and all of them are luxuriantly fertile, beaming with that touch of the picturesqueness of the Orient so cunningly conveyed by colour, as well as by the form of stately dhoums and date-palm trees. A few miles south of Berber low rocks crop out from the alluvial banks, and for a league or more stud the various meandering channels. At one or two points these traps and dykes almost form bars or weirs. These great upheavals are bad, and numerous enough to be dignified as 'shellals,' or 'cataracts.' A strong, cold north wind prevailing, we had no difficulty, with the help of our big lateen sail, in forging over the rapids. Low as the river was at that date, the stern-wheel steamers of shallow draft still ran up and down betwixt Atbara and Berber. I saw flocks of wild birds—pelicans, herons, ducks, and geese—on the trip, but very few crocodiles. The steamers had frightened

the saurians away: it was said there were plenty of them left in the Atbara and its pools, and hippopotami also.

On my up and down journeys I stopped at the British camp near Debeker, about twelve miles south of Berber. The troops were quartered by the river's margin, upon light alluvial loam, sun-dried, and fine as sifted flour. What with the tramping about of the troops and a half gale of wind, which was blowing the day that I arrived, the dust was blinding in camp. Officers and men were begrimed from head to foot, and life was made a burden to all and sundry. Leave was asked to select a new camp upon sandy soil farther south. On the 10th the Sirdar arrived at Debeker camp and inspected Gatacre's three battalions—the Camerons, Lincolns, and Warwicks. The two former were able to parade over 900 strong, but the Warwicks but a little over 600 men, being short by the two companies quartered in Dongola province. On the day following the Sirdar's visit to Debeker, advance parties of 200 men from the Camerons, Lincolns, and Warwicks proceeded four miles south to the ruined mud village of Darmali, where General Gatacre had selected another and better spot for a camp. The place was cleaned up, mimosa cut, and a big rectangular zereba, 1200 yards long, formed, with the ends extending down to the Nile. On the 12th to the 13th inst. the English troops moved into the new camp at Darmali. Two miles south of Debeker, Colonel Maxwell's brigade of Khedival troops had their encampment within a stout zereba. The Soudanese bands of his command turned out and played the

English regiments all the way from Debeker to Darmali, whilst the men, dressed in their smartest clothes, lined the route and cheered them as they passed. Even the unsophisticated natives, of all ages and both sexes, displayed curiosity enough to gather in crowds and watch the 'Ascari Inglisi' (English soldiers) on the march. As at Berber and other places, many and droll were the critical remarks on the appearance of the troops. The 'kilt' is no longer a puzzle to the native. He has solved its origin and 'raison d'être' quite satisfactorily to himself. The Highlander he quite understands. "He is like ourselves," they declare. "All these in the petticoats are wild men, fierce men—dervishes if you will, who have sworn to avenge Gordon, and never more appear in trousers until they take Khartoum."

To enable the gunboats to approach the camps, I found that, under the Sirdar's order, Captain Gorringe, a most able young Royal Engineer officer, was attempting, by damming and cutting, to divert the chief channel of the Nile. Nor was that all the doughty Sirdar had upon his hands, though it might have been fancied they were full enough with other matters. The Egyptian troops, extended in camps along the river, to keep them in employment, with the help of hired natives, did much of the railroad, grading scores of miles in advance of the construction gangs. There was cheerful excitement in all the camps at the prospect of a speedy encounter with Mahmoud and his dervishes. The 'Tommies' were jolly round their camp-fires, and the 'blacks' were nightly jubi-

lant, engaging in much war-dancing. News was being continually brought in, confirmatory of the enemy's forward movement. Berber was quite denuded of troops, only a very small force being left to guard the 'noozle.' Every available man was sent to the front, and the town was left to its inhabitants to protect it, or to care for itself in the event of the dervishes slipping around the Sirdar's left and raiding it. But they would have found little left there. The following order, which was issued from headquarters, caused a general exodus :—

"His Excellency the Sirdar desires and strongly recommends that all merchants in Berber should remove themselves and their belongings to Genenetta as soon as possible. He can guarantee no military protection.—By order, 14.3.'98."

Genenetta was over twenty miles away, and a trader cannot carry heavy boxes of goods on his back or remove them at a moment's notice. As a consequence, for two or three days donkeys and camels were hired for transport at war rates. Some of the merchants moved their property and placed it aboard boats upon the river. Others sent their goods out to the noozle, and not a few of the wiser Greeks and British put their stores in a state of defence, procured firearms from the authorities, and undertook to defend themselves and their property against any dervish raiders.

The climax of popular anxiety and feeling was reached in the province when 'fighting' Macdonald's brigade set out for the front to go into camp eight

miles north of Atbara, at the deserted village of Kunur. It was there that all the brigades were soon afterwards concentrated to oppose Mahmoud's forces. Macdonald's men were warmly acclaimed by the natives. Men and women shouted to them as they marched forward not to return until they had burned Omdurman and killed the Khalifa and all his dervishes. Their wives, with tribal and martial zeal, sang and danced to them, calling upon them to return victors or die in battle like men. The Sirdar also received an ovation, whenever he showed himself, from the natives. Skirmishes with the enemy, by land and water, were now becoming of almost daily occurrence. A squadron of Egyptian cavalry got across a would-be raiding band of Baggara, drove them off with a sharp fire, and then chased and punished them, following them up for many miles. The patrolling gunboats also had frequent brushes with parties of the enemy moving down the east bank. Lieutenant Beatty, R.N., commanding the *Fatah*, often pounded them with shell-fire and Maxims. The dervishes tried bush-whacking upon the passing steamers. Whilst the *Fatah* was running down to Dakala, when within twelve miles of the Atbara, a party of the enemy fired, one of them discharging an elephant gun loaded with heavy slugs. Two men on board were wounded by the discharge, a native soldier and Sergeant Russell, who was in charge of the uppermost Maxim, which was erected upon a staging behind the funnel.

I returned to Berber, from which I speedily set out again, but this time with all my impedimenta—my

camels, horses, servants, provisions, and forage. The British brigade had, with Colonel Maxwell's, been ordered up to Kunur to join forces with Colonel Macdonald. I rode through within twenty-four hours, going first to Darmali, where once more I found General Gatacre and his men. At Kunur I managed to secure a mud hut and small compound. No tent has ever been made, or is ever likely to be, that will keep off the sun's rays like a thick grass roof. Though but the 15th day of March, the weather had become very warm. On that same day the Sirdar rode through from Berber, inspecting the camps on his way, and established his headquarters in a convenient mud hut. Major-General Hunter occupied an adjoining one. Later on in the darksome night, ere the waning moon had risen, armed men, afoot and mounted, came in silently and lay down to bivouac in line of battle. They were the troops of Gatacre's and Maxwell's brigades, and the cavalry under Colonel Broadwood. Kunur was but a small place, situated on the margin of the alluvial soil and the flat desert. It may have held, crowded together in huts and hovels, a population of 1000 souls. The desert was dotted with scrub, thorny mimosa; and, westward between us and the Nile, thick bush had sprung up where formerly luxuriantly-tilled fields were weighted with continuous ripening crops. Around, there was the usual belt of date-palms. Strange that, with all the bustle and clamour of impending battle, whilst walking a little way from camp, I came up with three gazelle, quietly browsing. They let me approach within ten yards of them, and

then only moved away quite leisurely. Even had not camp regulations forbidden firing at game, much as I wanted a pot, I would not have drawn trigger upon the gentle creatures.

It was a night of high-strung tension for many in Kunur camp. Expectation stood upon tiptoe, for spies and deserters had brought in reports, which were for a time accepted as true, that Mahmoud had crossed the Atbara at Hudi, and could not be more than ten or twelve miles off. Would he venture to attack us during the night, or wait until morning? were among the questions being asked. Yet the news that there was an immediate prospect of a battle was received on all sides as joyfully as the announcement of an unexpected holiday by school-boys. The men of the black battalions capered and shouted with delight. Graver Englishmen, too, confessed to a feeling of satisfaction that at last there was a chance of paying off old scores, and that the overthrow of the Khalifa was brought so much nearer. At sunrise next morning everybody stood to attention, awaiting what was generally believed to be the beginning of the first serious battle of the campaign. Mahmoud's men were said to be the pick of the Mahdist army; and as their reputed numbers fully equalled our own, a sanguinary struggle was assumed to be inevitable. As little as possible was left to chance. Colonel Lewis, or Lewis Bey, who had ridden over from his camp on the Atbara, reported all secure and serene there. The protecting ditch outside the encircling wall and forts had been farther deepened, and his troops were on the

look-out. At Kunur, with three brigades, the Sirdar was in a position where he could afford ready help to Atbara camp, or fall upon Mahmoud's flank should the enemy decline to attack Dakala and endeavour to make a descent upon unprotected Berber. Hundreds of eyes, helped by scores of binoculars, scanned the

A Council of War—The Sirdar, Generals Hunter and Gatacre and Staffs.

horizon to catch sight of the van of the dervish force. I went out upon a hillock on the pebbly desert to get a glimpse of the enemy. There I waited in vain, till, with the glare of the hot sun, the landscape began to dance, when I returned to quarters and lunch within the zereba. The reports of the natives had been so

full and circumstantial that we all counted on a fight, and that ere high noon. There had been galloping to and fro of orderlies, councils of war between the Sirdar, his brigadiers, and colonels commanding—to some purpose, no doubt, for thereat dispositions for defence or attack had been settled, as well as the understood plan of operations, which was to permit the dervishes to cross the Atbara unmolested, and then to fall upon them, so that few of the enemy should be permitted to escape back to Shendy. The Sirdar's force was ordered to be prepared to march out and follow up the enemy if need be for a week. Meanwhile, Mahmoud was being anxiously awaited, whilst preparations went forward to bestow upon him a warm reception. Bush was cut by parties of soldiers, and a zereba was formed, inclosing the entire camping ground. Men also were sent out to clear the ground in front of the firing-line and burn the coarse tufted grass which might give cover to dervish riflemen.

Hours passed, and we had no signs of them, and no further reliable information. Colonel Broadwood had been sent out to reconnoitre, taking with him seven native squadrons and a battery. It was quite late in the afternoon when it was ascertained that relatively few dervishes had crossed the Atbara, and that Mahmoud and his whole force remained at a river ford, which they had seized. "Ah, then," our troops sighed, "the battle is off until to-morrow!" For further occupation that day, there were camp 'alarms,' and each battalion was paraded and marched to the place upon the firing-line,

behind the zereba, which it was to take up in case of attack by night or day.

A thrill of pleasure and satisfaction was diffused during the forenoon, when it became known that the first half of the Seaforth Highlanders, 500 strong, were arriving in the gunboats *Metemneh* and *Tamai*, then all but due from Genenetta. The battalion had come through in record time from Cairo and Wady Halfa. The remaining half battalion was to arrive next day. Certainly their advent was opportune in more senses than one. I followed the Sirdar and staff, and many more, to see the Seaforths disembark, a mile away south of camp, upon the bank of the Nile. The first half to arrive were the Indian veterans. Stalwart and braw they looked, their legs showing off their pretty scarlet striped hose. The four Scotchmen among the Sirdar's Generals—Hunter, Gatacre, Maxwell, and Macdonald—were, I know, 'proud' to greet the 'Seaforths.' Headed by three Soudanese bands, the Seaforths' march into camp was one long triumphal procession. The sinking sun was casting lengthened shadows as, to such tunes as 'Hielan' Laddie,' 'Annie Laurie,' 'Comin' thro' the Rye,' and the like, they strode along in a cloud of dust. First the men of Macdonald's brigade, who were on the right or south end of the line, turned out and cheered their new comrades. Maxwell's brigade in the centre and the stalwart artillerymen shouted their hurrahs as heartily. The Egyptian battalions were most demonstrative in their welcome, clapping hands as well as cheering. Finally, the Seaforths got to the end of the line

(it was about three-quarters of a mile), and among the men of Gatacre's brigade, the Lincolns, Warwicks, and Camerons, who knew how to receive them. That night, in the north end of the camp, they bore their share with their comrades in the duty of defence. 'Last post' had gone an hour and more, lights were out, and all was still ere I and a few good friends turned in.

CHAPTER X.

Camping by the Atbara.—Inviting Mahmoud to Battle.

For nearly a week the Sirdar's army remained encamped at Kunur. Itinerancy revels in extremes—change and rest, excitement and dulness, hunger and fasting. The soldier's life affords place for them all.

Alas! the exaltation, the feverish anxiety, the reckless now-or-never emotions that stirred all ranks, when it was believed the dervishes were about to give battle, were succeeded by feelings of disappointment, tinctured with chagrin. It was soon made plain to all that the intelligence of Mahmoud's having crossed the Atbara at Hudi was, to put the case softly, most premature. The reports of native spies and scouts, who had professed to speak as eye-witnesses, were wildly imaginary. Instead of being but ten miles off, on the Atbara, the enemy's main body was thirty miles away. Had they really halted at El Aliab? They had; but in fact, as we subsequently learned, they left that place on the 18th of March for the Atbara. The seven squadrons of Egyptian cavalry either had not got within touch of the dervishes, or something had gone wrong to prevent their knowing

the actual situation of affairs. After everybody had reduced his kit to the minimum, and packed ready for a week's rough work, there we were kicking about in the so-called camp of Kunur. It was no Aldershot or Shorncliffe, or a Sussex or Hants autumn manœuvres, where there are tidy huts and tents in which to retire for shelter and repose. The few dirty native huts were not occupied by the men. All the soldiers, English and Khedival, lived within the zereba line, and slept at night, under the stars, upon sand or loam. Talk of the Long Valley at Aldershot, its sand, dust, and heat of midsummer! It is a green, pure, cool paradise to Kunur camp when the khamseen (hot wind) blew, and we were smothered in an atmosphere of the siftings of the ages. It was a fine field for moral training, for we were exercised in all the copy-book and various other ethical maxims. Frugal fare, simple raiment, hard work, early to bed and (very) early rising; no frivolous distractions, but constant pressure of duty.

At Kunur, atwixt the Pole Star and the Southern Cross, our interest in England and home news was keen and loyal. We heard rumours of probable wars, and burned the more to settle our business off-hand. From darkness, which fell at 7.30 p.m., till 9 o'clock, when 'lights out' and silence in camp was the order, gave two hours for chatting and yarning. Those nightly social seances were occasions to be remembered, if only because of the unconventional freedom with which all topics were touched upon. Each day the troops were marched out and put through a series of exercises to accustom them to working together and

dealing with dervish tactics. One evil of Mahmoud's presence upon the Atbara was that the caravan traffic over the Suakim-Berber road was temporarily closed.

The Sirdar's mobile strength consisted, as previously mentioned, of four infantry brigades, 800 cavalry, four batteries (two of howitzers), with ten Maxims,—a force, with details, of 14,000 men. A change was made in the disposition of the troops within the oblong zerebaed encampment. The British brigade was placed upon the right and front, Maxwell's brigade in the centre, Macdonald's upon the left and front, and Lewis's brigade in rear. Compared with our native battalions, Gatacre's 'Tommies' were quick and certain as clockwork in the execution of every evolution. In marching, however, the Khedival troops moved faster, and could go further with less evidence of fatigue. But their style of dress was better adapted for marching than that of our soldiers.

A very singular and sad accident befel one of the British soldiers at Kunur. Private Burrows of the Warwicks, in stooping to light his pipe at the camp fire, dropped a package of Lee-Metford cartridges out of his pouch upon the hot embers. He picked it up, and leisurely began dabbing out with his fingers a piece of the smouldering paper-wrapping. Suddenly a loud explosion ensued. One of the unfortunate man's hands was blown off, and the other was so mutilated that it had, later on, to be amputated. Burrows stood the shock very well, although his abdomen was also bruised and torn. It was, he said, nobody's fault but his own. Apparently three or more

of the cartridges had detonated,—whether from contact with the brown-paper wrapping or pressure from a metal button or buckle, can never be known with certainty. He and all the sick were sent away to Wady Halfa. A general medical clearing-out of all the sick in camp and those unable to bear the fatigue of a prolonged march was likewise made. As for Burrows, he lived for several days, and then succumbed to his injuries.

Why the first day of the week is apparently dedicated to Mars, let those who care to inquire decide to their own satisfaction. It was on Sunday the 20th of March that the Sirdar's army marched out of Kunur camp for Hudi, upon the Atbara. They were led straight across the desert, cutting off the corner formed by the junction of the Atbara and the Nile. Hudi was about ten miles distant. The place so named must not be confounded with El Hudi, or Ras el Hudi, farther to the eastward. A recurrence of similar names for places widely apart is a frequent source of mistakes in the Soudan. Mahmoud and his force, in leaving El Aliab and the Nile, had turned their faces well to the eastward. That was why for two days the main body was lost touch of, only to be regained when it reached Nakheila. Within an hour from the issuance of the intimation and order to quit Kunur, the Sirdar's troops had started for Hudi. Gatacre's brigade led, marching in line of company columns by the right. With them were six Maxims and a battery of the 12½-pounder Maxim-Nordenfeldt howitzers. Reading from left to right, the British bat-

talions were ranged—Warwicks, Seaforths, Camerons, Lincolns. The Camerons paraded 988 strong, and the others, except the Warwicks, were also in full strength. Upon the left, and somewhat in rear of Gatacre's brigade, was Maxwell's brigade, moving in square. Inside the square were most of the baggage camels. They numbered only a few hundred. By the way, Colonel Kitchener was able, with but 640 camels, to move 100 tons of supplies quite thirty miles a day, but that was high-pressure rate of working. Upon the left of Maxwell's brigade, and also thrown back, followed Macdonald's brigade. It was accompanied by four Maxims and the second battery of 12½-pounder howitzers. Around the whole force were thrown out mounted videttes, less as a screen than as eyes of the army. As many as could be spared of the rest of the squadrons of Egyptian cavalry, the two companies of camelry, and the horse-artillery battery kept watch in front along our line of march. The army soon passed out from Kunur's dusty bivouac upon hard pebbly desert, which was relatively easy-going. Moving with a front extended for nearly a mile, the force swept across the rolling land: a tide of armed men, formidable of aspect, menacing with bared steel, they held their course. Sunday's weather was, on the whole, favourable for marching. The tropical heat of the previous days was succeeded by a howling 'norther,' which obscured the glare of the sun and made the air much cooler. It was not an unmixed blessing, for the wind raised clouds of dust, ladening the atmosphere as thickly with it as the drift from a

bolting-machine in a flour-mill. The fierce Soudan sun, quite tamed, shone dimly, as seen through a London fog. A homely proverb has it that all born of woman must eat a peck of dust ere they die. Peck! that is but a pinch to a cartload compared with what has to be swallowed by all who go campaigning in the Soudan. In a few minutes after we had started, from the Sirdar to the veriest 'Hamla ragil' (baggage-man), we were travel-stained as tramps, and dirty-looking as dustmen. Marching steadily, with but two or three temporary halts, by 3 p.m. ten miles had been traversed, and the army had reached the thick bush fringing the Atbara's course. There we found that part of Lewis Bey's brigade from Dakala camp had been before us, and had felled a forest of the thorny mimosa. It was Hudi, a locality only to be recognised because the Atbara had a ford near. Formerly there was a good deal of salt manufactured in a rude way in the vicinity. The brine extracted from the salty soil was placed in hundreds of clay-lined brick pans, which were heated by flues so as to evaporate the water, the salt settling in a sort of rough inverted drain-pipe. Gatacre's brigade, being upon the right, had its shoulder upon the stream; the other brigades formed upon the left, facing east. Very smartly the thorny mimosa were hauled in place, and an immense rectangular zereba was made, inclosing the proposed camping ground. The zereba lines extended from the 20-feet high steep banks of the Atbara, through the quarter-mile fringe of thick bush, dhoum palms, and sweet-scented mimosa, for nearly a

mile, until the left rested upon the almost bare desert. As for the Atbara, all that there was of it was a clear thin stream, meandering softly adown a 400-yards-wide valley of white sand, walled in by steep, loamy banks, overgrown with bush and aromatic halfa grass. Birds of tropical plumage twittered and sang among the palms and acacias, doves cooed, and wild-fowl called from the many pools which had formed in the spacious river-bed. The Atbara marks the dividing line between sub- and tropical-Soudan, so far as its wild animals are concerned—man excepted. Gazelle, ariel, and hares were seen in greater numbers, and there were footprints of the fiercer beasts of Africa deeply impressed upon the sands.

Whilst the cavalry, accompanied by two galloping Maxims and a battery of horse artillery, went forward upon a wide search for the enemy, the rest of the force settled down to cook, eat, and pass the night upon the ground, each man lying down dressed and with his boots on, a blanket for his mattress and covering. The dust permeated everywhere, and the chill night air was bitterly cold. Lewis Bey had left one battalion to guard Dakala camp. That post had been turned into a temporary base, and there hospital accommodation was provided for hundreds of probable wounded and sick.

During the night a ridiculous alarm startled the whole camp. Only those who have been through campaigns in savage lands can realise what a trying experience these night alarms are. Suddenly, without warning, a roar and rush of many sounds, as if a

tornado and avalanche together had struck the camp, startled everybody. Then several rifle shots punctuated the uproar, followed by hoarse calls of officers to the men. Surely the dervishes were upon us, was the first thought of every half-wakened soldier as he grasped his weapons. Yet it was only two horses which had broken loose, and started careering through the British lines among the Lincolns. Unfortunately, in the excitement, two men were wounded, one in the wrist, but the other—a private of the Seaforths, called Phillips — was dangerously stabbed in the chest. Whether it was a point from a dazed, half-waking comrade's bayonet, or whether, in the scramble, the man fell upon his own weapon, which penetrated through the throat to the lung, could not be cleared up. Another story was, that the man, in pulling the sharp weapon from the stock, had himself accidentally inflicted the wound. The lesson is frequently forgotten, that it should be drummed upon the private soldier's understanding that in night alarms his first duty is to stand firm and wait orders. To scurry or blunder in the Soudan before the dervishes, or anywhere else under such circumstances, is but to court disaster. In the morning, a cavalry convoy was sent to Dakala, and Phillips was carried down there. Little hope as the doctors gave of saving his life, the man happily recovered in a few weeks.

Next morning, at half-past 7 o'clock, as the enemy was known to be twenty miles or more farther afield upon the Atbara's border, the army marched out of Hudi camp to seek him and tempt him to give

battle. As before, in turning out upon the open desert, the troops moved much in the same formation as on Sunday, except that Lewis Bey's brigade was in support. The bush along the Atbara was denser, and the strip much broader as we advanced south. At 11 a.m., having marched most leisurely for eight miles, the force turned into another camping ground—a mere name—Ras-el-Hudi. There were neither huts nor houses near. Ras-el-Hudi was so called because there the Atbara's course trended more to the south, 'Ras' being head. The stream had ceased to flow, and the Atbara lay in pools of clear water. Beyond was but a succession of isolated pools and water-holes. Still, Ras-el-Hudi was a pretty spot, green and fertile beyond Hudi or any previous place we had halted at. Were it not for the palm fronds, the scenery would have been familiarly pastoral, and pleasant enough to have recalled delightful nooks of bordering grass lawns and woodland upon the upper Thames. We had seen nothing of the enemy, but the day was not to pass without news of him. Word came in from Aderamat, two days' march off on the Kassala road, that Ali Digna, a nephew of our old enemy Osman Digna, had left Abu Delek, and tried to capture that post. Thrice he had assaulted the position, but our new Abyssinian irregulars, despatched by Colonel Parsons from Kassala, had repulsed the dervishes. Ali thereupon retired, leaving forty-one dead on the ground. Better still, about 10 p.m. our cavalry came in, bringing positive news of Mahmoud's whereabouts.

Colonel Broadwood had pushed on through to

Umdabiya. Near there his troopers came into contact with a dervish cavalry outpost, and shots were exchanged. Having his orders, Colonel Broadwood sent in Captain Persse's squadron to drive the enemy, who were chiefly mounted Baggara, out of the bush. Afar upon the desert only a few dervish scouts were to be seen, but among the scrub, and under the palms by the Atbara's bank, the enemy appeared to be in some force. Dismounting his men, and employing them as skirmishers, the Baggara retired rapidly, only firing a few shots. The pursuit was not pressed very far, for men and horses were tired with their long ride; besides, the task they had been sent to accomplish, of getting into touch with Mahmoud's force, had been effected. Whilst the main body halted outside of the fringe of bush, upon the open desert, Captain the Hon. E. Baring's squadron was placed in advance to guard the scrub that had been won. Lieutenant Lord Tullibardine was with them at the time, and taking advantage of the peaceful aspect of things they were having lunch. Every precaution to prevent surprise was taken. Colonel Broadwood kept two of his squadrons mounted, the remaining six, for he had the whole eight squadrons out, being allowed to dismount and rest. One of the mounted squadrons was posted, a mile away to the left front, upon the desert, with videttes out. The other, Captain Baring's, was, as I have stated, in the bush, but half a mile ahead of the main body. They also had a line of videttes posted 200 yards in front, whilst the rest of the troopers stood by their horses. Food had been got out of their

haversacks by officers and men, of which they were partaking. It was just after high-noon, the hottest hour of the day, and the shade of the dhoum palms was delightful; the spot could not have been better chosen for lunch. Suddenly, without warning, there were shouts, a rush of galloping steeds, and two or three shots fired in instant succession. Three hundred mounted dervishes had stolen softly up through the bush. They had tried to stalk and spear the videttes, but most of the troopers escaped, only to be furiously chased by the whole body of the fleet Baggara horsemen. In they all came pell-mell. Quickly the Egyptians "nipped upon" their horses, but the leading dervishes got amongst them before they could move off to form up. Captain the Hon. E. Baring had not got astride his barb when two dervishes charged down upon him with uplifted spears. He dropped the foremost with a revolver shot, and his bugler served the second in the same fashion. Something in the nature of a mêlée then ensued, the Egyptian troops acquitting themselves very well, as the squadron rode off towards its support. Lieutenant Lord Tullibardine had also to use his revolver to get clear. Happily he, like Captain Baring, escaped unscathed out of the shock. Most fortunately, too, our troopers' nags had the legs of the Baggara mounts. In a few seconds they were clear of the scramble, and re-formed. At the same moment the dervishes were assailed in their turn by volleys from Colonel Broadwood's main body and fire from the Maxims, which soon sent them scampering back. The horse battery

also got into action, and sent a few shells into the woods. Captain Baring's squadron, reinforced by another, went back into the bush and cleared it again of the dervishes. The total casualties on our side were fifteen, nine of which proved fatal. The dervish loss probably amounted to twenty killed. Seven of the troopers were buried upon the field, the other two died after they were brought back to Ras-el-Hudi. Four or five of the wounded had terrible sword-cuts and spear-thrusts. The Soudanese two-edged sword inflicts ugly gashes, but as a rule it is not so deadly as a fair thrust from the huge-bladed, keen, and long-handled Baggara spear. Wonderful was the patience and good temper with which Colonel Broadwood's wounded troopers bore their sufferings. Two of them had received bullet-wounds. After the affair, the bush was searched tolerably close up to Mahmoud's camp, the Maxims coming frequently into play. Towards dusk the dervish camp fires were seen, after which the force returned to our zereba, bringing in five captured horses of the enemy.

Mahmoud's army, horse and foot, actually marched from El Aliab to Hilga and Nakheila in one day, although the distance from that part of the Nile to the place named upon the Atbara is thirty-five to forty miles. Strange to say, despite attempted ambuscades by day, which were attempted by their cavalry on more than one occasion, Mahmoud's dervishes never bothered us after dark. Yet they must have known our whereabouts with tolerable accuracy, and the disposition of our forces. It was very

gentlemanly of them not to harass us by night. They left us in peace to sleep undisturbed in our camps throughout the whole campaign. Yet Osman Digna, who was with Mahmoud, knew better, and that war demanded harsher methods, such as he had worried us with in 1888-9 at Suakim. Our camps upon the right bank of the Atbara were exceptionally open to snipeing by night. The sandy river's bed was between 300 and 400 yards wide, and the opposite or left bank, which we could not afford to occupy, afforded incomparably good cover for an enemy's riflemen. Had they made use of it, we should all have had to leave the shade of the bush, and nightly encamp upon the open desert.

The morning following the cavalry skirmish, a squadron of cavalry and the 13th Soudanese, under Major Collinson, were sent forward towards Mahmoud's camp to invite him out. Correspondents were not permitted to accompany scouting or reconnoitring parties. They had barely moved out six miles when they met a body of dervishes, apparently engaged in a similar errand against us. The sounds of heavy volley-firing at 6.30 a.m. led to the camp bugles sounding the 'fall in.' Rapidly the whole force was led by the Sirdar out upon the desert. Marching smartly, with Gatacre's brigade in the centre, and Macdonald's upon the right watching the bush, Maxwell's upon the left, and Lewis in support, the troops proceeded some two miles in the direction taken by the 13th Soudanese. By that time the sound of firing had ceased. Riding ahead to the left two miles or so further, I managed to

get just a peep at a few of the retreating dervish scouts. Our squadron had met a force of some three or four hundred Baggara horsemen. They opened fire on them, whereupon the enemy, with both cunning and dash, tried to hem the squadron in. The troopers, however, got off, and galloped back just in time, getting behind the 13th Soudanese, which had been formed in square. A fine surprise awaited the enemy, the main body of whom came on to within 900 yards of Collinson's infantry, and then halted. Several volleys were given them, which sent them about and out of range. The wind had fallen during the night, and the bright, strong sun had raised such a mirage that objects could not be seen for any great distance. Colonel Broadwood pressed on beyond the infantry brigades with the rest of his troopers, the Maxims, and the guns, and hurried the retreat of the dervishes, who, if on a reconnaissance, failed to get a look at our camp or our force, for our men were led in such a way as to keep their numbers and position hidden. The enemy must have sustained some loss, for four dead horses were found upon the field. After waiting out several hours, the whole of the soldiers were marched back into camp. The remaining bush within our zereba was cleared, and burned down during that afternoon, the camp being much strengthened thereby. Upon the left corner of the zereba, stones were piled upon raised ground, turning that angle into a fort. A battery and several Maxims were placed in the work. Next day, March 23rd, Colonel Lewis and his three battalions, together with a small body of cavalry,

started before sunrise to take his turn at endeavouring to coax Mahmoud to attack. He went on to Abadar, where the friendlies had built a small, but stout-walled inclosure on high ground at the edge of the bush. The enemy left him severely alone, in undisturbed possession. At nightfall he returned with his battalions into camp.

That same day there had been an extra crop of wondrous rumours about the enemy's intentions and plight. During the morning a deserter from the Khalifa's Jehadieh (black riflemen) came in, and, according to rule, was conveyed to headquarters, where he was closely questioned by Colonel Wingate, Chief of the Intelligence department, and practically Chief of Staff. The black declared that Mahmoud's men were in sore straits for food, having to subsist on the tough rinds of the dhoum palm nuts and the cooked leaves of a species of cabbage palm, and such wild fruits and vegetables as were to be found in the bush. Only the emirs had meat and grain at their meals. Now though ripe dhoum nut-rinds are good enough to nibble at, having, I think, a gingerbreadish flavour, and boiled cabbage palm leaves or other green stuff is filling, either or both afford an unsatisfactory meal to a hungry man. They are surely purely vegetarian diet, but neither native nor European finds in them any staying sustenance. In a short time they produce serious internal disorders, and this Mahmoud would know, and surely, we thought, sally out to battle in a few days. But we recked not of oriental stubbornness and capacity at playing a waiting game. There was another chance

offered to stir the enemy out of his lair. The Nile was our true base, and Mahmoud had foolishly left behind him at Shendy, or rather the village of Hosh Ben Naga, two miles south of it, his surplus stores, together with the women and children, and only a poor garrison of 400 dervishes to hold the place. An order was issued by the Sirdar for one of Colonel Lewis's battalions, the 3rd, to return to Dakala to relieve the 15th Egyptian battalion. The latter force, under Major Hickman, were bade to embark upon gunboats and barges, and proceed forthwith to capture and destroy Hosh Ben Naga and Shendy.

CHAPTER XI.

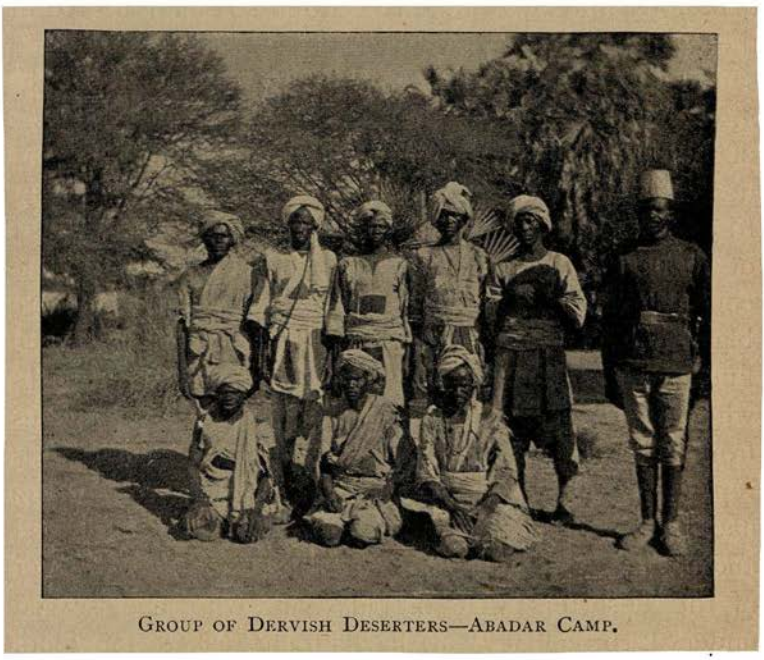
TWO SUCCESSFUL OPERATIONS.—CAPTURE OF HOSH BEN NAGA, AND CAVALRY RECONNAISSANCE OF MAHMOUD'S CAMP.

IT was intended that Ras-el-Hudi should have been only a temporary halting-place. Consequently, few or no sanitary precautions were taken respecting bathing, washing, and watering our animals in the Atbara pools. The place had been turned into a camp, its sweet cleanliness soon departed, and with the hot weather Ras-el-Hudi became an uninviting spot. By day, cavalry patrols scoured both banks of the Atbara, close up to Umdabiya, to see that the dervishes were up to no tricks. Strong posts and guards watched the zereba by night, and along the British lines which faced in the enemy's direction, the sentries were doubled. No one was allowed to pass more than a few yards beyond the zereba entrances after 9 p.m. As for Abdul Azim and the other friendly auxiliaries and natives, they were encamped by themselves some mile or more in the bush nearer Dakala. There was another smaller encampment a mile and a half or two miles behind ours. It also was in thick bush, and upon broken, rough ground, in a savage wild of thorny

mimosa and dwarf dhoum palms, not easily penetrable. There, in rude grass and palm-leaf shelters, the faithful amazons of the black soldiers had their camp. True soldiers' spouses, these women always persisted in following their husbands to war. There was no military transport or supplies provided for them. Yet, though the track was long, and a bare desert, gathering their scant household gear together, mostly a few earthenware cooking-pots, and a goatskin or two filled with grain, wheat, dhurra, and beans, which they carried upon their heads, with their cotton cloths girt round their waists, barefooted, they set out after the army. Those who had babes too young to walk bore them upon their backs or shoulders, the elder children trotting by their moiling mothers' sides. Talk of courage! it was something of a sight to see these poor black women, with their households upon their pates and in their arms, bravely bearing their burdens in order to go campaigning with their husbands and lovers. They marched in groups, and helped each other by turns upon the road; and in their encampments they washed, ground meal, baked bread, and sometimes brewed merissa for their men. The black soldiers did not forget them, but gave of their food to the women; and whenever anything was captured, took the prizes to their wives. In that way, after the fall of Mahmoud, nearly every woman had a load of stores, and many of them got donkeys, taken from the dervish zereba, upon which to transport their babes and baggage back to the Nile.

There were plenty of fish in the Atbara pools,

some of which we managed to catch with nets and hooks. Like nearly all fish in tropical waters, they were a bit woolly-tasted, but still they provided a change of diet, and were to that extent acceptable. As for crocodiles, numbers of them were seen. A big fat fellow, fully twenty feet long, made a dash at a



GROUP OF DERVISH DESERTERS—ABADAR CAMP.

soldier who was drawing water, but the man escaped with a fright and splashing from its tail. Subsequently the saurian got a Lee-Metford bullet under his shoulder, which caused him to plunge furiously and betake him to somewhere else than swimming about beside our quarters. The first few ravenous, cadaverous deserters from Mahmoud's camp were daily

followed by others. When given food, most of them ate so ravenously that the biscuits handed to them had to be taken away lest, in their greedy hunger, they should kill themselves. On the 26th of March Colonel Maxwell went forward to Abadar to reconnoitre. His force comprised two squadrons, two battalions, and two Maxims. Even so small a force in the vicinity did not draw Mahmoud out. During the same afternoon a batch of eight deserters from Mahmoud's force came in, one of the men wearing the dervish jibbeh, patches and all. As a rule, the deserters usually tore off the patches before coming in, to avoid being shot at. That brought up the number of deserters from the enemy who had arrived in the course of the day to ten. Most of the men were blacks. There was among them a young Jaalin who knew the country, and who stated that Mahmoud's whole force lay in the bush, about eighteen miles from Ras-el-Hudi. His story confirmed previous reports of the cavalry under Colonel Broadwood, who had persisted in saying that the enemy were there, and not at Hilga, as some spies had declared. Another of the deserters was an old man, who had served under Lupton Bey. All of them asked for food, devouring the coarse army biscuits with great gusto. The deserters also added that Mahmoud's Jehadieh and Baggara were quarrelling. If true, the news would have been of the utmost importance. The worst of it was, that stories of that nature brought in by deserters required to be greatly discounted. Such difficulty as existed in the enemy's camp was due chiefly to the

want of proper food supplies, and the charge brought by the blacks, that the Baggara got an unfair proportion of what was intended for all.

It was known in Ras-el-Hudi camp on the 28th of March that Major Hickman had captured Shendy and Hosh Ben Naga. The official account of the, to us, glorious news did not, however, become known till later. It appeared that the exact details of the expedition led by Major Hickman against Shendy and Mahmoud's depot there comprised 900 infantry, consisting mostly of his own men, the 15th Egyptian battalion, 200 friendly Jaalin, under Sheik Ibrahim of Gakdool, Bayuda desert, 21 artillerymen, with two 6-centimetre Krupps, under Major Peake, and a few others, medical staff corps, etc. The force was embarked at Dakala upon the three gunboats *Zafir*, *Nazir*, and *Hafir*, and several giasses, which were taken in tow. Commander Keppel, R.N., led the flotilla.

All went well until nearing Shendy before daylight on Sunday, when the leading gunboats struck upon a sandbank. Every effort was made to get the steamers off, but they stuck fast for some hours, and their position was seen by the enemy. The surprise intended therefore failed; and, as it was ascertained later, time was thereby afforded for the harems of Mahmoud, Osman Digna, and the chief emirs, to be hurried off towards Shabluka and Khartoum. It was a regrettable incident from some aspects that the ladies should have escaped, as their capture would have influenced many wavering chiefs to have deserted Mahmoud's banner. Subsequently, and after the

victory of the Atbara, it was one of Slatin Pasha's griefs that no fewer than twelve emirs, disposed to join us on the first opportunity, were killed. Had their wives and families been safely out of the Khalifa's grip, they would have openly fled to the Sirdar's camp. At 8.30 a.m., the gunboats having got afloat and steamed south of Shendy three miles, to the village of Hosh Ben Naga, the troops were disembarked. The river being low and the banks high, the gunboats were only able to cover the landing with their Maxims, which had been rigged upon lofty platforms either side of the steamers' funnels. Although the enemy watched the proceedings, it was from a safe distance between the village and the river. It was noted that most of them were horsemen—mounted Baggara. They stood ranged in line in two columns, with an interval between them. Colonel Hickman decided not to make a frontal attack, which the dervishes apparently expected, and stood prepared to meet. Leading his men up a shallow khor, or depression which trended to the south-east, he avoided observation, and got upon the enemy's left flank and close to the village before his exact whereabouts were discovered.

As Hickman's force was debouching upon the higher ground, the enemy wheeled round as if to attack, but a few well-aimed volleys emptied many saddles, and the dervishes began to gallop off wildly towards the desert. The few slaves and footmen also fled, without firing a dozen shots. Almost at the same moment Major Peake's two guns came into action, and hastened the flight of the enemy, which had become general. Those

of them who had galloped into the village to save their property bolted out. The men, women, and children in Hosh Ben Naga followed as fast as they could in the wake of the fugitives. Hickman's battalion tried to head the stream off, but they only succeeded in driving them farther into the desert. Sheik Ibrahim's Jaalin, who had old scores to settle, ran fleetly after the Baggara, potting at them with their Remingtons whenever they caught up with any group of the horsemen. The rout was complete, and Hickman's troops, who remained well in hand, behaved admirably, showing no disposition to break off, to loot. For twenty miles the pursuit was continued, the troops keeping the fugitives from the river, whilst the gunboats followed in support. The Jaalin, however, kept on after their now bitter foes, capturing as they went horses, camels, and donkeys. Mounting the captured animals, they followed, and pressed the runaways sorely. It was not until near midnight that, burdened with captives and spoil, they abandoned the chase, and returned towards Shendy to rejoin Major Hickman.

Meanwhile, Major Hickman had led his troops back to Hosh Ben Naga. It was found that 700 Baggara and blacks had been left to hold the place, and that a brass rifled howitzer remained mounted in one of the enemy's forts. Shendy was visited, and found to be in ruins—almost as sadly wrecked as old Berber. There were very few inhabitants in the once populous town. Those that were there gave themselves up, and numbers of slaves, who had escaped during the flight of the Baggara, surrendered to the Egyptian

soldiers. The tukals and grass huts of Mahmoud's former camp at Hosh Ben Naga, the forts, and a number of buildings at Shendy were burned, as well as a quantity of grain and forage. Major Hickman's losses were slight, the casualties, including those among the friendlies, being less than twenty. Major Sitwell received a slight bullet-wound upon the shoulder. On the other hand, the enemy had lost severely, over 160 Baggara being killed. Having finished his task, Major Hickman re-embarked his men, the prisoners, and trophies taken. The prisoners included 650 women and children, most of them Jaalïn, who had been seized by the dervishes after the Metemneh massacre. Among the other spoils of war were one brass gun, many stands of arms, spears, swords, and banners, 250 animals, camels, horses, and donkeys, fourteen war drums, and fourteen boxes of small-arms ammunition, and several for cannon. The captured women and children were conveyed to the fort upon the west bank opposite Dakala. As for the male prisoners, and the Baggara in particular, they were sent down the Nile to Wady Halfa, where they will be safe till the war is over.

The moment the gunboats appeared before Shendy, fleet camel messengers were sent to Mahmoud, announcing Major Hickman's arrival. Others were sent afterwards. In fact, Mahmoud received the news of that disaster to his followers fully as early as the Sirdar,—another illustration of the saying that ill-news travels fast. A dervish deserter, who came in to Ras-el-Hudi on Tuesday night, the 29th March, told us that mounted Baggara and camel-men had got into

Nakheila, Mahmoud's camp, from Shendy, on Monday, the day of the action. These swift messengers' tales, we were told, caused the enemy deep anxiety. It seems that when the expedition arrived at Hosh Ben Naga, the Baggara and natives were in high spirits, having been engaged, by instruction, in celebrating Mahmoud's victory (?) in the recent cavalry skirmish. The dervish Emir had magnified that petty affair and surprise in the bush, of Captain Baring's squadron, into a great battle, and the seven Egyptian dead left temporarily upon the field had been multiplied by rumour and on paper a hundredfold. That was why their cavalry were drawn up awaiting the landing of Colonel Hickman's little force. As already stated, the first volley or two from the infantry put an end to their menacing attitude, and off the entire force of Baggara horsemen bolted, helter-skelter, accompanied by the population of the camp and village.

As the culminating event of the campaign draws near, so that the pen picture of life in camp may not lack in colour and accuracy, I shall keep as closely as possible by the notes then made by me day by day, more frequently hour by hour. Phew! it was getting warm by the banks of the Atbara, although the sun had travelled no further north than the equator. March 28th was a specimen day. A temperature of 117° Fahr. was registered in the shade of tukals and grass huts during the afternoon. A mere thermal record looks simple enough, and perhaps seems of no import to many. Try, not an hour or two, but days of Turkish baths at that heat, and a crescendo temperature up to

130° Fahr., which we knew was coming along, and it will be felt there is much in the figures. Across the desert the breeze came at times as the breath of a furnace. The water wherewith to quench our thirst was a trifle 'gamey.' Still, the health of the men was remarkably satisfactory, there being but a few cases of typhoid, and only one of smallpox. Invalids and weaklings of any kind are an added care in camp, so every few days all who were unfit for duty were packed off to the base hospital at Dakala. On Sundays there were always divine services in the British camp. There were three army chaplains—the Anglican, Rev. A. W. B. Watson; the Roman Catholic, Rev. Father R. Brindle; and the Presbyterian, Rev. J. Sims. The preaching, usually brief sermons, was done on Sundays; the ministering to the constant, material, and the occasional, moral needs of the men was untiringly conducted every day, and almost every hour, throughout the week by those clergymen.

After, and sometimes at, Church services on Sundays, General Gatacre used to practise the Napoleonic method of taking his men into his confidence. He made a neat little speech to them on Sunday morning, the 27th of March. Addressing the 'Tommies' after the last hymn had been sung, he said: That he was pleased to see they were all so well and fit for duty. They had not had much work to do (laughter). He had hoped that they would have had more. The zereba had been smartly constructed, and he liked to see them keen and 'nippy' at every soldierly task. Of course, when they did a thing well, he

looked to have them do so twice as well on the next occasion; and as for the Sirdar, he wanted it done four times as well. The brigade was to be congratulated; and he was proud of them, on the entire absence of crime, and he would add, of drunkenness. (Roars of laughter, for the 'Tommies' had seen neither rum nor beer, nor indeed any intoxicating liquors in their canteens since their arrival in the Soudan.) Their patience, remarked the General, was not likely to be put much longer to the test. He trusted that the dervishes, who were caught in a tight place, would have to come out of the bush soon and fight. The Sirdar had sent up an expedition to capture Shendy, where Mahmoud had his base, and had left behind stores and all the women and children. When the emirs learned that the town had been taken, and their slaves and wives were prisoners, they might be expected down upon them at Ras-el-Hudi in a fine angry humour. Of course, they would administer a proper lesson to the dervishes, and by and by march on to Khartoum and end the campaign.

That afternoon, one of those accidents befel which is inseparable from any sphere of life. Sergeant Mumby, of the Lincolns, whilst bathing in a deep pool, was seized with an attack of heart-disease and drowned. The men joined hands and searched for the body, which was not recovered until next day. Mumby was buried in a soldier's grave dug for him under a palm-tree outside the zereba. As time wore on, the dervish scouts and our cavalry patrols who went out to search for them grew more intimate.

The firing of a warning shot or two always sent the enemy's horse to the right-about. One day some troops led by Captain Haig along the Atbara's left bank, towards Umdabiya, saw a party of the dervishes moving about in the bush upon the opposite side. They called banteringly to them to come in and give themselves up. A good deal of a Soudan brand of London cabman's or omnibus-driver's chaff ensued, disparaging remarks being indulged in by both parties respecting their leaders and the genealogy of their parents. A new and kindlier phase was that it all passed off with chaff, neither the Egyptians nor the dervishes seeking to stalk or fire upon each other. Five dervish deserters gave themselves up to our cavalry on the afternoon of the 28th March. They were subsequently examined at headquarters, where they re-told the now familiar tale of hardship and starvation. Mahmoud's force would die or desert, they declared, so that he must needs surrender or fight very soon. He might be expected down upon us any moment, we were told.

The water for the troops on outpost or reconnoitring duty had either to be carried in goatskins or fantasses —iron tanks. Now, Atbara water lying for half a day exposed to the sun, in a fantass, was too hot for a bath, and not quite up to the boiling temperature, so as to make good tea. Besides, the fantass treatment made it decidedly too 'high' in flavour. I have never understood why, except because of the labour involved, the fantasses during prolonged halts were not buried in shallow trenches, and wetted earth put over

them to cool the contents. In that way only could water be made drinkable, and an assuager of thirst. Upon an average, just over half-a-dozen deserters came in daily from Mahmoud's camp. On Tuesday, the 29th March, one of these arrivals was a person of some consequence—a subsidiary chief and emir—our first of his rank. He came in seated upon a big camel, and escorted by an Egyptian trooper on either side. Hung upon his shoulder was his dervish sword, round his dirty but gaudy jibbeh was a big native cartridge-belt, stuffed two deep with ammunition, whilst depending from the 'makloofa' (camel's saddle) was a Remington carbine. The approach of deserters under escort was always heralded by a loud murmur and clatter in that quarter of the camp where the Soudanese and Egyptian battalions were posted. It gave everybody an opportunity to run out and see what was happening, and to watch the different kinds of reception extended by the native soldiers to these arrivals. Sometimes our troops were friendly disposed to the new-comers, now and then they expressed animosity to the dervishes. On what these apparent likes and dislikes were based it was impossible to guess, but that their judgments were accurately formed was often made abundantly true. It may be that very many of our Soudanese soldiers, having first served the Khalifa, knew the personality or reputation of most of the deserters who came in. Though neither the Sirdar, nor Mahmoud, I may say, was to be suspected of taking them into his confidence, it was surprising the number of times they hit upon

incidents that did happen. The imposing-looking dervish referred to, seated upon the camel, had a mixed, but on the whole friendly, reception. He turned out to be an officer attached to Mahmoud's person, and by birth an Abyssinian. He was a swart, squarely-built, round-faced fellow, wearing a fringe of black whiskers circling like a sub-halo into the eclipse of his turban. The sleeping alien tribal spirit, stirred by want of food in the dervish camp, had led him to escape to us. A good deal confirmatory of previous intelligence and the clearing up of several obscure points was what the headquarters obtained in the usual course of inquiries from the fugitive Abyssinian. He said that the dervishes were all together within a big oblong camp eighteen miles farther up on that, the right, bank of the Atbara. The camp, he said, was inclosed by a zereba of thorny mimosa, and their front was protected by lines of trenches and one or two small works. Mahmoud had nine brass rifled guns in his camp. Zeki Osman, late governor of Berber, held the position nearest us, Mahmoud himself held the centre, and Osman Digna was farthest off. Another deserter who came in turned out to be an old Egyptian soldier, captured and kept by the dervishes in the Soudan. He was a native of the Yayonni, and so black as to be easily mistaken for a Soudani.

In another respect the 29th of March was a notable day. On that evening a small force slept out at Abadar, in the old camp built by the friendly Jaalin, five miles away. In the morning, Colonel Townsend

went out there with his battalion, the 12th Soudanese, supported by two squadrons and two Maxims. I went with them and had my second look at Mahmoud's scouts, a few of whom fell back slowly before our force. The banks of the Atbara are higher and there is more outcrop of rock at Abadar than between Hudi and Dakala; besides, the river's borders are but 200 yards apart. The fringe of vegetation and dhoum palms upon the right bank was furthermore quite narrow. Somehow the dervishes declined to trouble the troops, or even to spy what we were at too inquisitively. In the afternoon, Colonel Maxwell proceeded to Abadar with the 13th battalion Soudanese and four galloping Maxims. He took over the command, and both battalions bivouacked close to the enemy. Strange to say, they were left absolutely unmolested during the night. Evidently the destruction of his camp and stores, the capture of his women, and the killing of his tribesmen at Hosh Ben Naga had not worked Mahmoud up into his usual state of frenzy and blood-thirstiness. He was persisting in a lying-low policy. Something else was needed to shake him up, and the trial came in the shape of another cavalry reconnaissance sent by the Sirdar to Umdabiya.

The reconnoitring body accompanied by Major-General Hunter went forward from Ras-el-Hudi on the 30th of March. It was not until it reached Abadar that the force was finally made up in the form in which it advanced to Mahmoud's lines. From Ras-el-Hudi, Colonel Broadwood started with six squadrons, a battery of galloping Maxims, two companies

of the camel corps, or camelry, the battery of horse artillery, 6-centimetre Krupps, and a battery of the new 12½-pounder howitzers or Maxim-Nordenfeldt cannon. The camelry, the howitzers, and two Maxims were left at Abadar with Colonel Maxwell's troops, whilst the two squadrons of cavalry that had remained

COLONEL MAXWELL.—ON A RECONNAISSANCE.

out there all night, proceeded with the rest of the troopers. When Major-General Hunter and the cavalry went forward, Maxwell Bey moved his battalions and guns two miles ahead, taking up an excellent position upon a swelling pebbly knoll on the open desert. The infantry he formed in square, with the guns in front, to await events. I was permitted to go

forward to that point. Beyond seeing several groups of dervish camel-men and horsemen who came and went, but rarely approached nearer than 1500 yards to the square, the hours passed tamely. It was a frizzling hot day, and the sun's rays made such a mirage that every object seemed to float or dance in the horizon. Towards the afternoon we fired two rounds of shell from our doughty Maxim-Nordenfeldt 12½-pounders at troops of dervish cavalry, scattering them in all directions. Thereafter, Maxwell's infantry marched back to Ras-el-Hudi, followed and watched by Mahmoud's scouts. So ended that day's adventures for the infantry. Of course the cavalry had returned ere the footmen did, but that is to anticipate. The troopers had a somewhat livelier experience than Maxwell's battalions. When they had gone about six miles they met a force of between 400 and 500 Baggara horsemen. The latter fell back before them, so the Egyptian troopers pressed on beyond Muttras, and up to Nakheila. At that point the dervish cavalry disappeared in the thick bush bordering the Atbara. Colonel Broadwood led his troopers across the bare desert, beyond rifle-range of the bush. A deserter, who rode with the cavalry, said, when the force had gone one mile beyond Nakheila, that that was where Mahmoud had his camp. Colonel Broadwood halted his force between 1200 and 1000 yards away, opposite the spot indicated. From there at first little could be distinguished apart from the dense growth of thorny mimosa and dhoum palms bordering the Atbara. A little way to the south was a shallow khor, studded

with bush and Halfa grass. Looking in that direction, a line of zereba, and a structure like an earth-work or fort, and a few people moving about could just be descried. Mahmoud, we had been told by deserters, had his front protected by trenches, and his horses and camels were hidden in deep cuttings or ditches behind these, inside his zereba. Several rounds of shell from the Krupps were hurled in, one or two missiles bursting in a fort without apparent effect. Then the Maxims opened, playing 'pat-pit-i-pit-pit,' without provoking an answer. The enemy's position being much hidden by an intervening swelling knoll, Major-General Hunter, accompanied by Captains Watson, A.D.C., Mahon, and Kincaid, rode forward to make closer inspection, whilst the Maxims crooned their deadly music. Cautiously the three officers first circled and then mounted to the top of the pebbly knoll which concealed the character of the enemy's lines. Arrived there, about 300 yards from Mahmoud's zereba, they were enabled to see that their guide had not misinformed them.

At first the General was disposed to think that the enemy had just evacuated the position, but a moment later the trio of officers saw rows of dervish heads and eyes watching them from the trenches. Upon rising ground, close to the bush, were huts and 'lean-toos,' bodies of footmen armed with swords and spears, and farther to the right a party of Baggara horsemen. The enemy contented themselves with looking, nor was a shot fired from dervish gun or rifle, though the officers pulled out and made use of their field-glasses.

What General Hunter and the officers saw was a partial clearing, 200 yards or so deep, between a long line of zereba and a background of dense bush, grass, and palms. How wide the wooded belt was betwixt the clearing and the Atbara they had no means of knowing. The zereba, or cut thorn hedge, was not formidable, being neither high nor wide. On their left it turned at right angles towards the river, on their front it stretched in a wavy line to the right for over one mile. Evidently, like the Sirdar's, Mahmoud's zereba was an oblong, but built the reverse way of ours; its longest face stood towards the desert, whilst ours was at right angles to the waste of sand and pebbles. Yet both were, tactically considered, rightly placed, for with our superiority in guns and rifles an attack from the open desert needed not be feared. On the other hand, if the Sirdar's troops had to advance through thick bush, the dervish weapons would be almost as effective as our own. Facing where they stood, the officers saw a trench-line close behind the zereba, and behind, upon the upward sloping ground, two other lines of newly-dug narrow trenches. A little further to their right, and fifty yards within the zereba, was a raised earth-work, over a score of yards in length, with two embrasures upon its front for cannon. The work was about eight feet in height, and was cunningly sought to be masked by cut bushes laid in front and along the outline. Looking farther to the right, or north, could be seen a palisaded entrance, made of the trunks of dhoum palms. The dervish leader must have expected instant attack, for he had forbidden his men to fire, lest they

should disclose their preparations for defence. They were well aware that their shooting was indifferent compared with ours, and so sought to withhold their rifle-fire until our troops came within the 300 yards zone. Mahmoud's express orders to his dervishes directed against the 'God-forsaken Sirdar' and the Anglo-Egyptian soldiers, was not to waste ammunition by firing from a distance. As they wanted to die, and "we feared death," they were to wait until we were quite close. The enemy's rifle cartridges had much deteriorated. The bulk of them were indifferent and of poor quality compared with those they had even so late as the 1896 campaign. Most of the cases were apparently turned out from Khartoum arsenal. Though of pure copper, they were badly made; the sides were broken, and the caps not placed in the centre. Major-General Hunter and the juniors, having completed their survey, turned and rode off, without having been seriously molested for their temerity. In fact, only a few shots were fired by the enemy at the officers and the main body as they retired. The whole force returned to Ras-el-Hudi the same evening.

CHAPTER XII.

Camp Life by the Atbara.—Forward to Abadar.

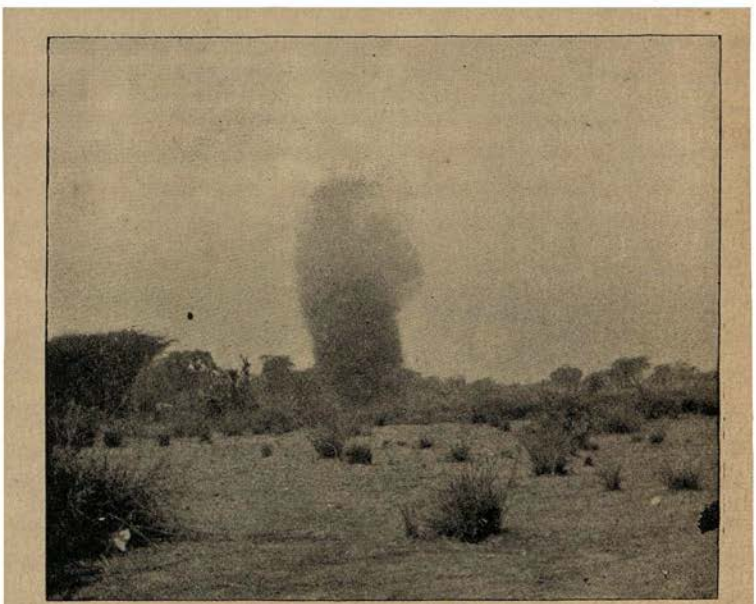
All-fools-day came round and found the Sirdar's army still encamped at Ras-el-Hudi. This was what was being said, and what was happening at that date.

"Plainly the dervishes were not the fierce wild men of former days. The question was uppermost in many minds—What next? Would the largest and best army ever seen south of Berber attack Mahmoud in his camp? Or would he be left undisturbed? It would have been deplorable had he given us the slip some night, and retired to Shabluka or Khartoum. Such a trek or retreat in his then plight, without adequate food supplies, would doubtless have involved him in a loss of five thousand men. The enemy's force was estimated at 16,000 men. Some put it at much less, a few at considerably more. His cavalry was probably under 2000, all told. Still, to have escaped from his predicament with a loss of even 5000 men would not have greatly troubled Mahmoud's tough digestion, physical or moral, if he made up his mind to bolt. Most probably he hoped that we would humour him by attacking him. Would the

Oriental wear out the English patience, and drive us to determine matters by forcing him to fight upon his own chosen ground? It looked so, for the Sirdar could hardly permit Mahmoud to escape without a drubbing. What would the critics say?" I had wondered why the ordeal of fire had not been resorted to; for, as the prevailing wind was northerly, and the bush dense and dry, a forest on flames might have forced the dervishes into the open any day.

On the last day of March the weather was intolerably close for several hours, during which several so-called 'devils' (shitam) ran amuck through the camp. The proper 'devil' is indigenous to the Soudan. I write not of the potent, illustrious, and mysterious personage, the, to Northern-born, relentless foe of mankind, or to the Eastern, crooked, tantalising spirit, but of a thing of air. The 'devil,' small or large, is a whirlwind that spins and skips across the desert, marking his course by a column of sand, dust, and pebbles. He is brother to the ocean waterspout, and often as mischievous and dangerous. Three of them waltzed in close succession through the Egyptian and British lines. They came to us across the desert, in appearance mighty, inverted, whirling black cones, their points from forty to eighty feet in diameter. When they struck the camp it was with a roar as of many rushing trains in a tunnel. As they furiously spun, coats, blankets, helmets, papers, bully-beef tins, in sooth, all the flotsam and jetsam of the camp within reach, were caught up in the ascending vortex, and borne as bubbles to the clouds. Tents and tukals

went as they sidled by, and the brave Camerons and Seaforths had great work with their kilts. When the 'devils' had gone, we were all black as sweeps, and almost blinded and choked with grit and sand. At night a further trial was vouchsafed us. A howling norther blew with hurricane force until 4 a.m.,



A 'DEVIL' OR DESERT WHIRLWIND.

filling the air with dust, till the stars and moon were blotted out, and it was impossible to see more than thirty yards. If anything could make a 'brick' of a man, it is such stuffing with dust and burning as one gets in the Soudan. And there be those who think campaigning in the Soudan an affair of beer and skittles. That reminds me that 'Tommy Atkins'

had not yet had either rum or extra rations issued to him, although both were down for issue, but with the official proviso, "when available." Truly, I could not venture to dispute the remark I overheard in the Lincolns' lines—"A quart of the best would go down well here, lads!" Anything liquid and nippy would have been a rare treat.

RAS-EL-HUDI, Sunday, April 3.

At last! Ras-el-Hudi camp will be struck to-morrow at daybreak. Later on the whole force will be led by the Sirdar against the dervish leader's lines at Nakheila. Major-General Hunter and Colonel Broadwood, with the cavalry, have taken the measure of the foe's defences, and searched, though not over successfully, I learn, for his weak points. For two weeks we have sat watching each other. Now the duel to the death is going to begin. Mahmoud has vowed over and over again that he will be victor or die upon the field. Hundreds of his captains and thousands of his tribesmen have sworn to follow his fate. Of these sort of ante-mortem pledges we have all heard, and we have seen them pass unredeemed among civilised as well as savage people. As it would be exacting too much from the troops to make one march of eighteen miles to Nakheila, for, be it remembered, this is the Soudan, and the shade temperature to-day was 115° Fah. in camp, they will go forward stage by stage. There is no need of undue haste. The troops, therefore, are to bivouac to-morrow (Monday night) six miles onward, at Abadar. Indeed, Lewis Bey's brigade went there to-day, and will remain out

to-night. To-morrow at 5 a.m. the eight squadrons of cavalry, with the horse battery, under Colonel Broadwood, will cover the advance of the remainder of the army into the new camp. The troopers will thereafter go forward on a reconnaissance, which, if not satisfactory in settling certain questions about Mahmoud's works, will be repeated on a larger scale on Tuesday next.

It is dependent on these contingencies whether the dervish camp is to be bombarded and stormed upon Tuesday or Thursday next. Anyhow, the soldiers will not be harried with a toilsome march before having to tackle the enemy's entrenchments. Care is being taken to bring the whole force upon the scene of action fresh and full of ardour. This morning, whilst Gatacre's brigade was attending divine services in camp, the three Khedival brigades were out drilling. A special attack exercise was introduced, to which Egyptians and Soudanese took gaily. They were ordered to charge through their own zereba. The instructions were to run steadily, and jump into the middle of the brush, and then tramp through. They were warned, above all, to try and keep upon their feet, for if they fell they would be caught in the cruel thorns and torn, besides running the risk of being trampled by comrades charging behind. There were several gallant rushes made over the thick camp zereba. In each instance, led by their British officers, black and Egyptian battalions got through, taking the hedge, with a cheer, in splendid style. True, there were a number of falls, and some of the officers and men got

cut, and trousers and coats were the less for the scramble, but there were no accidents of a serious kind, or any mishap which delayed the rush through the zereba. It should not be forgotten that Friday is the Sunday of the Khedival troops, so they were not being kept from church. I had never noticed that there were more morning and evening praying done in the Khedival rank on Friday than any other day.

When the news got out among the troops that the very mal-odorous camp was to be 'struck,' there was widespread rejoicing among all ranks — Soudanese, Egyptian, and British. Everywhere there was a virile feeling of exultation at the sure prospect of battle. And had the dervishes been near enough to hear them, Gatacre's boys, I think, would have shouted for joy. The toil, the tension, the marches, the 'pigging' in Soudan dirt and heat were, after all, for some good, and were forgotten. Tommy's pride had been hurt, in that he had been kept on the leash so long, as if he were afraid of any number of scrubby dervishes, and could not thrash them any day. Who thought or cared at the moment whether they might receive a death-wound or not in the coming battle? Hope forbade so gloomy a forecast, and like Cromwell's Ironsides or Roman gladiators, the troops hailed the looming front of battle. Mr Atkins had still one anxiety left, as I discovered during a stroll through the ranks of Lincolns, Seaforths, Camerons, and Warwicks that afternoon. He wanted to be let 'go' at Mahmoud as soon as any of the native brigades. There was a fear he would be held in reserve. The

men had no taste for standing off and firing whilst the Soudanese and Egyptians were sent forward to get into close quarters with the bayonet. If Gatacre's brigade was fairly and squarely started with the rest to carry and clear a portion of the dervish works, I had no doubt nor hesitation in saying that task would be done in so prompt and thorough a style that it would astound the enemy. This is what is likely to happen when the Sirdar finally decides to attack the enemy's lines. There will be a demonstration by friendlies on the opposite bank of the Atbara, and one of the battalions or the cavalry will be sent to menace the enemy's right rear. Lieut.-Colonel Long, R.A., commanding the artillery, will open the action with four batteries and six Maxims from a position upon the pebbly desert, about 700 yards from the centre of Mahmoud's position. His batteries include twelve 6-centimetre Krupps and twelve of those excellent automatic recoil Maxim-Nordenfeldt 12½-pounders. As the latter pieces can fire a very heavy double shell, the dervishes will have a bad hour if the cannonading lasts for that period. Mahmoud has ten brass rifled howitzers, which should soon be knocked out of action, unless he persists in keeping them, as well as his rifles, masked and dumb until the troops actually rush forward to storm his camp. We hear that he has, besides his zereba, three lines of trenches and many rifle-pits, and one or more interior forts. I know the dervishes are capable of choosing strongly defensive positions, and fortifying them with much skill. Their trenches are usually deep, and are generally so narrow and winding

that shell-fire scarcely touches the defenders. At Tukruf, close to Kassala, the Italians contrived to turn the dervishes out of a strong position, and surely the Sirdar will go one better. Mahmoud and Osman are said not to be on amicable terms at the moment. Mahmoud has accused him of leading the dervishes to Nakheila, and of now trying to back out and run away. Osman, he declares, would have to stay and die with him. To make sure of that wily one, he has had him watched and confined to camp, if not actually put in irons. Such are some of the stories brought in by deserters.

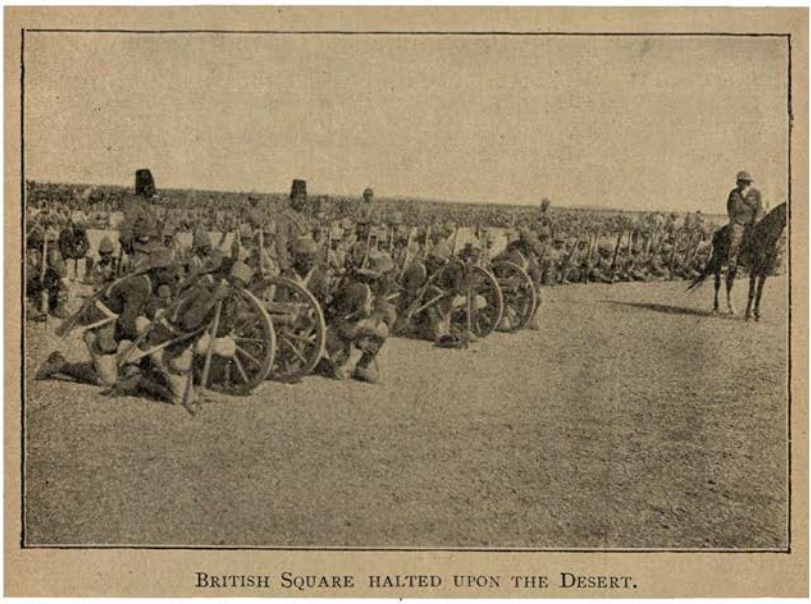
Yesterday a cavalry patrol on the opposite bank, when near Abadar, 'bagged' eight dervishes. The dervishes were chased for a mile and surrounded, whereupon they quietly surrendered. The prisoners were all wearing dirty jibbehs, or patchwork shirts. They were mostly blacks, their captain being a tall Dinka. At headquarters they told their story. It seems that a party of thirty-one or more of them had permission to leave Mahmoud's camp and go foraging. They were allowed only a few rifles, their other arms being swords and spears. As for the eight prisoners caught, they had among them but two Remingtons. The whole party left Nakheila camp on Wednesday last, and, travelling down the left bank of the Atbara, they got to the Nile. There they raided a fertile island and secured some food, but the inhabitants rose against them, and killed or scattered most of the band; but the eight who had kept together managed to escape to the mainland. They were endeavouring to return to Mahmoud's camp when they were caught. The

prisoners said provisions were scarce at Nakheila; and though the ordinary soldiers (ansar) got a little food, the wretched camp-followers were starving. Mahmoud, they thought, would stay and fight, as he could not very well get away. The news about the fall of Shendy, and the capture of the women and children, their emirs had tried to keep from them, but it had got about, and was causing trouble. If it once got to be known by the dervishes that the Soudanese would be allowed to surrender, and would not be all instantly killed by the English, half of Mahmoud's men would run away. So afraid was he of mutiny that all day long the Baggara kept the rifles and guns in their own hands, and stood guard over the magazines. No black was allowed out of the zereba with a rifle.

This morning Mahmoud made his first little real score against us. Sixty odd friendly Abadiehs patrolling the left bank of the Atbara, nearly opposite Abadar, had halted and sent some camels ahead to graze. Suddenly a few dervish horsemen dashed up, and before they could be dealt with, the Baggara secured three camels and one of the native drivers. It is the first capture, so far as known, that Mahmoud has made in this quarter. A reliable spy just returned from Omdurman reports that great excitement prevails there at the peril of Mahmoud and the advance of the English. It is believed that if Mahmoud is defeated and his army destroyed, the Khalifa's power will suffer collapse, and that Abdullah will have to flee for his life towards Kordofan. Mahdism is dead, the man declares, and the Khalifa will not be able to keep

an army to fight another battle against us, either at Shabluka or Omdurman. This brings back the oft-mooted question whether, given a tropical country to campaign in by English troops, it is not better, in every sense, to bring off a battle as soon as possible with your enemy.

To-day, after the Presbyterian service in the



BRITISH SQUARE HALTED UPON THE DESERT.

Cameron lines, General Gatacre made his customary Sunday address to the men. He told them that they were going forward, and that every man would have a chance of proving what British troops could do. There would be work for them upon the banks of the Atbara, and he did not see why there might not be several Victoria Crosses to be won. He hoped that his men would

deserve them, and win them; and if they did, he would say to those who got them, "I am proud of you, men, because you have done your duty." They could all do that, though each might not secure a Victoria Cross, but each could deserve well of his country and the respect of all honest men. The ownership of a Victoria Cross only signalised a man who had done his duty right well.

"ABADAR CAMP, Monday, April 4.

"Ras-el-Hudi camp was duly struck this morning. Long before daybreak the troops were astir, and the cooks were round their fires getting tea for the men. The Sirdar and Staff set out before sunrise. Colonel Lewis's brigade had a quiet night, and at 7 o'clock this morning Gatacre's brigade and Macdonald's brigade joined them in this Abadar camp. It is much like, in appearance, what Ras-el-Hudi was when we first pitched there—full of thick bush, dhoum palms, mimosa, big and little, castor-oil plants, Halfa grass, convolvulus, and other creeping vines. Doves are cooing in the branches overhead, birds of brilliant plumage are piping in the trees, and gaudy butterflies are flitting about. Beside us is the hot, glistening, quarter of a mile wide, vale of white sand, over which the Atbara for four months a year rolls a tawny flood. Just now it is but a tiny rivulet of clear water, sidling Nilewards along the left or opposite bank. Farther down it as often flows beneath as upon its sandy bed, for it is one of those streams that disappear and reappear at intervals in their downward course. Maxwell's brigade, which had been left to see that every-

body and everything was cleared out of Ras-el-Hudi, got in here about noon. Several fires broke out in the old camping-ground, and the flames spreading very rapidly, there was difficulty in one or more instances in getting property carried away to a place of safety. Some of the correspondents' chattels were nearly burned up.

"The water here is excellent, and can be drunk with safety. As yet Abadar camp also is clean and sweet. Fatigue parties of soldiers are busy cutting down and clearing away the denser parts of the bush, and constructing a zereba around the camp. The hedge of cut thorns will be an oblong, the longest side of which will face the desert, looking east. Its greatest length will be over one mile. The troops are posted in the following order:—Macdonald's brigade upon the right, Gatacre in the centre, Lewis's upon the left centre, and Maxwell's upon the left or rear. There were about twenty Greek traders who had within the last few days ventured up to Ras-el-Hudi. They have moved their scanty but dear stock of tinned goods and tobacco up here. Among the rest who have come on hither are a colony of women and children and natives. They had formed a camp about one mile from ours at Ras-el-Hudi, and opened a kind of market, where dates, tomatoes, and onions, procured by travelling long distances, were sold. Most of the women are the wives of the Soudanese soldiers. These faithful blacks like to follow their lords to the wars and share their hardships. For better security they pitch their shelters and hovels in thick bush, and take their chances of

a dervish raid with the bravest. To-day they were again to be seen with all their poor household goods on their backs—namely, a few earthenware pots, some mats, a goatskin or two filled with grain and what not, trudging behind the troops, and turning into a camp of their own a mile in the rear. Patient and happy creatures, their piccaninnies riding on their hips, as brave as their maters, looking at the soldiers with wonder in their big dark eyes."

Such was the record made by me at the time. It shows perhaps better than any re-written lines of mine can, our round of life, its little excitements, and the situation of affairs as it at the time appeared to us in the wilds.

CHAPTER XIII.

A Raid and a Reconnaissance.—The Eve of Battle.

It became known at Abadar on the evening of the 4th of April that there was to be a further thorough reconnaissance made of Mahmoud's position by our cavalry early next morning. There was also a hint that the troops would be moved forward in the course of a day or two. No safeguards were relaxed at that period. When 9 o'clock came round each evening, quietness ruled within the zereba, the soldiers lying down in the ranks, ready to spring to attention. Bugle-calls were dispensed with after dark, all necessary words of command being passed softly down the lines. That afternoon I sent my Egyptian seis or groom, Robeia, who was an ex-Egyptian trooper, off to Dakala with despatches for England. On the way Robeia had an exciting adventure.

Earlier on that same day a camel transport column, bearing a number of sick soldiers, had also started for Dakala. They had been instructed, as my men had also been, to return laden with supplies. The camel convoy was led by Captain Healy, an able and experienced transport officer, who had been in many a

brush with the dervishes. Hastening to overtake Captain Healy's party, Robeia had got a mile or two beyond Ras-el-Hudi, and just within sight of the column, when he saw a small party of mounted dervishes between him and the convoy. An unfortunate straggling baggage-man was cut off and killed under his eyes. The blood-curdling sight was enough for Robeia; so, wheeling his horse about, he set off, galloping back towards Ras-el-Hudi, where, as he knew, there was a party of friendly Abadah Arabs holding a strong zereba. Three of the Baggara, mounted on swift steeds, and riding furiously as is their wont, pursued Robeia. My man luckily chanced to be on the back of a very fast mare, so he more than held his distance. Descending a steep khor, however, his horse stumbled and fell, and Robeia came a cropper. He was too thoroughly frightened to be much hurt. Jumping to his feet and regaining the reins, he was in the saddle again in a trice, and away like the wind, whilst the dervishes were shouting for joy at having, as they thought, caught him. They followed him up to within half a mile of Ras-el-Hudi, but a shot or two from the friendlies sent them to the right-about. Robeia discreetly decided to stay where he was until things assumed a more tranquil aspect.

My groom's pursuers were members of a small band of dervishes, who, having ridden down upon the left bank of the Atbara, had ventured across to the right bank at sunset. They hit unexpectedly upon the convoy. There were yells and great commotion for a moment or two, as about fifteen Baggara dashed at

the half a hundred camels and the 'hamla' men of the transport corps. Most of the latter grabbed their rifles, and, encouraged by Captain Healy and one or two of the sick British soldiers, who had got hold of muskets, began firing at the dervishes, whilst the convoy was being hastily formed up. Some of the enemy got close enough to wound two of the hamla-men with their spears, but the Baggara, in their turn, were badly hit by the firing, several being killed. The dervishes thereupon drew off a little way into the bush, and made use of the few Remingtons they had to fire back at the convoy. Captain Healy moved his men a little farther from the bush, formed square, and prepared to pass the night upon the desert. Meanwhile Robeia, with a few friendlies, passed around and got to the convoy. His swift mount was borrowed by Captain Healy, and an Egyptian officer was despatched upon it with a report of the situation to the cavalry camp and the Sirdar, coupled with a request for help. A detachment of Colonel Broadwood's cavalry arrived on the scene within three hours, when it was found that the raiders, who probably numbered not more than thirty all told, had disappeared. Before daybreak the convoy proceeded unmolested to Dakala. The dervish band was doubtless a small body that had been sent out in search of food by Mahmoud.

The cavalry reconnaissance carried out on the morning of the 5th was a much more serious affair. It was one of those military enterprises of which a just criticism might say, "All's well that ends well." The troopers of Colonel Broadwood were accompanied

by the Egyptian horse-battery, of Krupps and the galloping Maxims, commanded by Major Lawrie and Captain Peake. Major-General Hunter again commanded. He had with him, on this second visit to Mahmoud's camp, Lieutenant-Colonel Long, R.A., Major Kincaid, Captain Sir H. Rawlinson, and Lieutenant Smyth. Moving slowly, with vigilant pickets covering their front, the force kept far out upon the bare desert. Nearing Umdabiya, the usual dervish mounted patrol was met with and promptly driven in. The cavalry, still maintaining a distance of over two miles from the Atbara's course, only turned in when opposite Mahmoud's camp. Then they rode forward until about a thousand yards from the outer line of the dervish zereba. Halting the force at that point, where, owing to the high rolling ground, their numbers and disposition could not be too clearly seen from the enemy's works, Major-General Hunter, attended by several officers, proceeded to get a yet closer look at the enemy's defences. But the dervishes were in no humour to repeat their former mistake, when they foolishly imagined that the cavalry had come to charge into their zereba. Major-General Hunter had not got far in front before he discovered that the dervishes meant to trap the whole force if possible. The enemy began firing with cannon and rifles the moment the troops appeared within range, to which the horse-battery and the Maxims replied vigorously. Suddenly a battle had been begun. At the same moment it was detected that two large masses of the enemy's horsemen

had emerged from the bush to right and left of the zereba, and were seeking to hem in the Egyptian cavalry. Another body of Baggara also came on at the gallop to attack the reconnoitring force in front. Only a hasty peep could be obtained of Mahmoud's lines, but what was noted confirmed the previous inspection. There was a zereba, not a thick one, a row of palisades, trenches, and several small forts. Evidently the works had not been further strengthened. It was 9 a.m. when the onrush of dervish horse began. Major-General Hunter galloped back to the main body of Colonel Broadwood's squadrons. The horse-battery on the right, helped by the Maxims on the left, firing rapidly, caused the Baggara charging in front to haul off and swerve to the south. An instant later Captain Persse's squadron, No. 1, which was outlying and covering the left, was attacked by a body of dervish horse. There was a hand-to-hand tussle, and by the help of two squadrons from the main body, the more hardy of the Baggara, who risked closing, were temporarily repulsed. An almost similar state of things happened upon the right where Major Le Gallais was with the 5th squadron. Although in the mêlée the dervishes were driven off, still through the dense clouds of dust caused by the tramping of so many thousand horse hoofs, it could be seen that the enemy's cavalry were momentarily increasing in numbers. They were threatening the rear as well as the flanks of the whole force, and the Maxims and battery of Krupps, by dint of rapid and accurate firing, could scarcely restrain them from cutting in *en masse*. Out

of the thick cloud of dust a few dervishes would ride brandishing their swords and spears, and sometimes seeking to cross steel with our officers. The Egyptian buglers, using their revolvers, generally dropped a number of those truculent gentry. Captain Prince Francis of Teck, and indeed all the English officers sitting in front of their men, had to use their revolvers repeatedly. It was almost to invite death to dash at the dervishes, or follow them away from your own ranks into the dust and scramble. Colonel Broadwood, Major Le Gallais, Captain Persse, and Lieut. Lord Tullibardine had to use their sabres repeatedly.

More than once it looked as if the force would be cut off. But the Baggara, though wildly riding up to the squadrons, always lacked courage to charge home. Bands of dervish infantry, swordsmen and riflemen, came streaming out of their zereba on the run to join in the attack. Quite 2000 of them sallied forth. Major-General Hunter ordered the cavalry and guns to retire a few hundred yards. Fortunately the galloping Maxims can be fired when falling back; and as the enemy had a great dread of those weapons, they prevented the dervishes from actually riding into the retreating squadrons. The Baggara, however, pressed in upon the flanks, and there was more or less cutting and slashing, give-and-take work. As for the Egyptian troopers, nearly all of them behaved with great gallantry, boldly attacking or meeting the dervishes in hand-to-hand encounters, and with inferior numbers, but better discipline and skill, worsting them. The guns and Maxims greatly contributed to save the

situation. Squadrons charged to the rear as well as to left and right, to lessen the pressure of the enemy, and win elbow-room.

The second stage of the retreat was more deliberate. Two squadrons dismounted, and using their carbines, enabled their comrades to take up another position one or two hundred yards in rear. Again and again this manœuvre was successfully repeated. All the while heavy firing was going on, and the dervish horsemen were still charging, and champing about the flanks and rear. Once they made for the guns when these were turned in another direction firing case at a body of Baggara upon the right. Major Le Gallais caught them with his squadron; and taught them a lesson. A dervish emir came again and again galloping out of the dust-cloud, and brandished his spear within ten yards of Colonel Broadwood. That officer offered him single combat, but the emir declined to accept it, vanishing when he found the buglers taking pot-shots at him with their revolvers. Captain Persse's squadron had just driven off a mass of the enemy, when returning he saw another body of dervishes taking advantage of his temporary absence, charging the Maxims in rear. The dervishes in fact were so numerous and active that, as an officer said, "when you were sweeping them back on one side, they came pouring in like water upon the other." Cheering his squadron to their utmost speed, Captain Persse, with Colonel Broadwood and other officers, led them direct at the flank of the enemy's horse. For an instant the dervishes tried to rally, but the Egyptian troopers broke through, scattering the

Baggara in all directions, and emptying many saddles. The gunners had stood manfully by their pieces, and wheeling them about at the critical moment, with a withering fire, hastened the flight of the enemy. It was the rapidly moving dervish infantry that alone sorely tried the Egyptian gunners and cavalry; for had they not come into the action, the troopers could have readily managed to repulse the unsupported Baggara horsemen. The sound of the rapid and continuous cannonading and the heavy machine-like whirring of the Maxims were plainly audible in Abadar camp. Orders were issued by the Sirdar for the Soudanese battalions to move out to render assistance, if needed, to the cavalry. Gatacre's brigade also was bid to take precautions to be ready at a moment's notice, for it was hoped that the dervishes might follow Colonel Broadwood's troopers back to our zereba. The affair, however, lasted but one hour, for by 10 a.m. the cannon were no longer required. And, indeed, the dervishes did not follow up or press the fighting with the reconnoitring force for more than two miles from Nakheila, where their camp was. They gradually relaxed their efforts as soon as it was seen that their footmen were unable to get to close quarters with the troopers, and thereafter contented themselves with exchanging rifle-shots from safe cover.

There were eight troopers killed and fourteen wounded during the engagement. Captain Persse, in one of the last brushes with the enemy, received a severe bullet-wound in the left forearm. Some of our dead had to be left upon the field, but the wounded

were all brought in. The poor fellows, native officers as well as men, bore their injuries uncomplainingly. Undoubtedly the dervishes lost very heavily both in men and horses during the fight. It would not be an exaggerated estimate, judging from the numbers seen down, to say that the dervish casualties exceeded 200 in killed and wounded. Amongst the slain was a youth of seventeen, who was a younger brother of Mahmoud. Our Maxims fired over 6000 rounds. Within an hour after the engagement couriers had come into Abadar camp with the news, and the doctors, together with a bearer party, went out to meet and assist in carrying the wounded back. About 1 p.m. the force marched into camp.

Before daybreak next morning, 6th April, the Sirdar's army marched out of Abadar zereba to proceed some eight miles nearer to the enemy's camp. Our grass huts, tukals, and rude shelters we left standing. The zereba, too, was neither broken down nor damaged in any way. Indeed, a small zereba-protected work was made for the better protection of the camp guard and friendlies who were expected to assist in holding the place. A party remained to gather up and bring on the left baggage and stores required, to the next camping ground—Umdabiya. The army moved forward as before, Gatacre's brigade leading, and one of the Khedival brigades scouring the bush, which is thick and wide about Umdabiya. That place was once the centre of a large native salt-manufacturing industry. There were many evidences of former extensive settlement and cultivation, for the banks of the Atbara in

that vicinity are spacious, flat, and the soil a rich brown loam. There were several large, square, and octagonal ruined mud-walled structures. The diameter of some of those thick-walled forts and salt factories was from 80 to 150 feet. Any one of them could have sustained a siege from field guns, for the mud bricks were piled to height and thickness of fourteen feet in the angles and faces of the works. There was one of those occasional halts upon marches, when, either from passing difficult ground or other circumstances, troops have to close up. It happened near one of the forts or works in question. Hard by, there were the evidences of a hastily deserted dervish camp, and some of the houses of the mean, widely-ranging, deserted village of Umdabiya. Dervish tukals, old grain and water skins, gourds and earthenware pots, and angreebs (native bedsteads) were lying about in all directions. The angreeb makes a comfortable couch. A low-shaped wooden four-poster, without upperwork, often with prettily rounded and carved rosewood legs and ornamented frames, it is held lashed together by network of raw-hide or tough grass ropes. The network makes a comfortable and, in hot weather, cool mattress. I rode on to the bank of the Atbara, and had a look at its fresh, deep pools and heavily wooded borders. Everybody who cared-to helped themselves to skins, vessels, gourds, stools, and angreebs, for after all the ground is not a faultless bed, with rats, insects, and snakes skitting about you when you lie down, and wish to drop off into cosy slumber. The blacks and 'gippies,' who best knew the good qualities of

these domestic conveniences, fell out of the ranks and loaded themselves like pack-mules with the various articles, to carry them to their new camping-ground.

The half of the 15th Egyptian battalion, with Major Hickman; Lieutenant Beatty, R.N., and his detachment, with a 24-lb. rocket tube; and two guns of Captain Peake's battery, also arrived later in the day. Major Sitwell, notwithstanding his wound, had come up with his men, so as to be present at the anticipated attack upon Mahmoud's camp. Our allies, the friendly Jaalin, also moved up from Ras-el-Hudi into Abadar camp, which they held in some force for the next few days for us. As for the wire entanglement at Abadar camp put down outside the lines of the British brigade by Major-General Gatacre, that was discreetly removed. It had not caught and tripped up any dervishes, but it had caused many a field-officer riding out of the zereba to come a terrible cropper. Major-General Hunter and many other officers galloping out through the authorised gateways or openings to inspect outposts and reconnoitre had had aggravating spills. I myself had a bad tumble one morning, my horse's legs being struck from under him, and the poor brute falling heavily. The merits of the wire as a horse- and man-trap, in fact, were so well known to the 'Tommies,' that it became a sort of popular camp diversion to assemble and watch the frequent spills, and hilariously speculate upon their number and character.

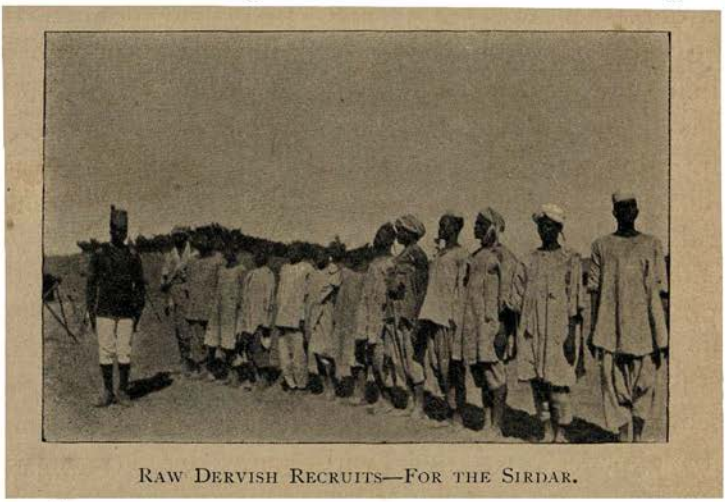
When thorny mimosa had been cut, and a new zereba was made at Umdabiya, Major-Generals

Hunter and Gatacre, with their staffs and a small cavalry escort, rode out to inspect the desert track. They proceeded fully four miles without mishap in the direction of Mahmoud's camp. Their object was to acquire a personal knowledge of the ground over which the advance upon the enemy's works was to be made. Umdabiya was surrounded by much thick bush, of which sufficient was cut down near the army's lines to secure a good clear range for rifle-fire. Disused houses were inclosed by a zereba, and the place was turned into a strong, though temporary, fort. The reserve stores, hospital, baggage animals, and servants were to be left there under guard of the half battalion of the 15th Egyptian when the troops moved out to give battle.

Thursday, the 7th April, was a day of preparation in Umdabiya camp for the morrow's coming battle. We all knew, even officially, by that time that Mahmoud's camp was to be attacked and stormed next morning, 'Good-Friday,' a holy-day for Christian and Moslem alike of the Sirdar's force. Naturally, we were not allowed to wire a line home about the coming event. It was a busy day for many of us. All the baggage had to be neatly packed, and every man had to set out with as little impedimenta as possible. Only a very few camels were to be allowed to follow in one of the supporting squares. Water and provisions sufficient to last for two days, in case of accidents, had to be stowed in bottles and haversacks. The more seriously disposed also fell to letter-writing home, and figuratively 'setting their houses in order.' Our 'Tommies'

for the most part were delighted that the long waiting, weary marches, and trials had at last ended in affording them an opportunity of measuring their strength against the 'beastly' dervishes. Major-General Gatacre also made a last effort to have his men more comfortably shod. Every soldier in the British brigade who could handle an awl or do a bit of cobbling was employed at boot-mending. Camp dust-heaps were again ransacked, and buried boots were disinterred, whilst the men who needed new ones picked the most likely and decent 'fits' they could find out of the refuse. These they carried to their comrade cobblers, who, with stitching and pegging, managed to turn out something with soles on them that the troops could walk in, across pebbles and prickly thorns. The constitutionally heavy Egyptian, or fellaheen soldiery, went about their routine duties much as usual, some of them betraying a slightly awakened interest in their accoutrements, and seeing that all were in good order. They evinced a livelier feeling about their commissariat arrangements, whilst as to the coming battle and its issue—well, that was in the hands of the Fates, and their interest in it was a sort of indirect one. In the lines of the blacks all was excitement and jollity. There was laughing and crowing, tom-toming and singing, as it were the eve of a christening or a wedding party. All the while, too, they were seeing to their arms, and smartening up their personal appearance, after their manner. It was strange to see the sons of Ham exhibiting some of the characteristics of the old Spartans in making ready for battle. Their

enthusiasm was spontaneous and catching as the laughter of children. I am not so sure that in them the thirst for war was so much due to a desire for blood-spilling as to the love of struggle, the enjoyment of contest, and anticipated victory. Be it remembered, too, that a considerable majority of these same blacks were themselves but ex-dervishes of a year or few months back-dating. Indeed, after Firket, Dongola,



RAW DERVISH RECRUITS—FOR THE SIRDAR.

Abu Hamed, every battle and advance in truth, the pick of the black dervish prisoners had always readily enrolled in the Sirdar's ranks. Often had I seen hundreds of these dervish prisoners taken but a few days previously in battle, hard at work striving to learn their drill from some sergeant-instructor 'What's-his-name.' Many of them evinced a sound knowledge of the use of tactics and how to handle their rifles. With the patches freshly torn from their Mahdist jibbehs, they

would drill and drill from sunrise to sunset, impatient to acquire military instruction, so as to arrive at the dignity of a uniform, with boots included. Sartorial aids to personal importance and dignities differ in every country. In the Soudan, the boy or man who has a pair of boots upon his feet is no common fellow, but an individual to be reckoned with. Another strange feature to European minds about these black ex-dervishes was, that once they had donned the Egyptian uniform, they were remarkably faithful to their new leaders. Desertions were rare, and there was never any hesitation upon their part to prove to the Mahdists that they had learned much, and were far better soldiers than their late dervish comrades and relatives. In battle they never hesitated to use lead or steel against brothers or fathers, but when the contests were ended they invariably sought to save the lives of all their own people.

That day, the eve of battle, Major-General Gatacre, as usual, took his men entirely into his confidence. He explained to them with some detail what was expected from each battalion, adding that alacrity and steady courage were counted on from all ranks. The nature and position of the enemy's works, as understood, was described. There was to be a night march, a bombardment of the enemy's lines in the bush, and then an assault, in which the brigade was to bear a foremost part. Their task was to carry the left and most exposed flank, and he relied upon their doing it smartly. They would find, as the reconnaissances had disclosed, that the first obstacle to be met with

was a zereba. It was not, luckily, a very big or heavy one. The Camerons, who were to advance in line, supported by the other battalions in column, were to haul away, as best they could, part of the bushes, so as to leave openings for the other battalions to pass through. Without waiting, the three supporting columns were to run in, deploy as best they could, and drive the dervishes from the trenches and their camp straight down into the Atbara. Macdonald's and Maxwell's native brigade would be upon their right, so they were to be careful to fire only towards their own front. Behind the zereba was a low palisade, and then the trenches, but they would be able to clamber or jump over the tree-trunks, to come hand to hand at the dervishes, and settle scores with them. As for the zereba, thick leather gloves had been provided for the men to put on, to safely grab hold of the thorny bushes. Where they were unable to pull them aside easily, short ladders and blankets were to be thrown across the zereba for the men to pass over on, and tread down the obstructions. He trusted entirely to the Camerons to clear a way to get at the enemy.

All was in readiness early on the afternoon of the 7th April for the final advance. The cavalry were out in strong force, and so were the camelry company, watching the enemy. A strong detachment of native troops cut a 100-feet wide path from the camp, straight through the bush, for a mile in a south-easterly direction. The road debouched upon the open desert at the appointed rendezvous, where the army was to form

up for the night march to a point opposite Mahmoud's camp at Nakheila. It was another instance of those wise precautions of the leader, who left nothing that could be arranged beforehand to chance, his object being to have no one missing the rendezvous, or arriving there late, through reason of having lost his way.

CHAPTER XIV.

The Battle of the Atbara.

Although at Umdabiya we were encamped within eight miles of Mahmoud's picked warriors, and in a position encircled by dense bush, we were left unmolested during the night. On the afternoon of the 7th April the whole force, except the half battalion left to guard the baggage and stores, marched out to storm the enemy's lines. I am not aware that I can better the description of the battle that ensued by giving another account than that which I wrote just after the event, when all the scenes were most vividly impressed upon my mind. After the fatigues of the march and the excitement of the action, and when I had finished despatching my long but hastily written telegrams, which were scrawled out whilst sitting upon the pebbles under a blazing desert sun, half blinded and wholly wearied, and terribly thirsty and hungry, I managed to procure some refreshment. Then later on, I wrote the long description of the battle of the Atbara, which I now reproduce with such few additions and alterations as appear most necessary.

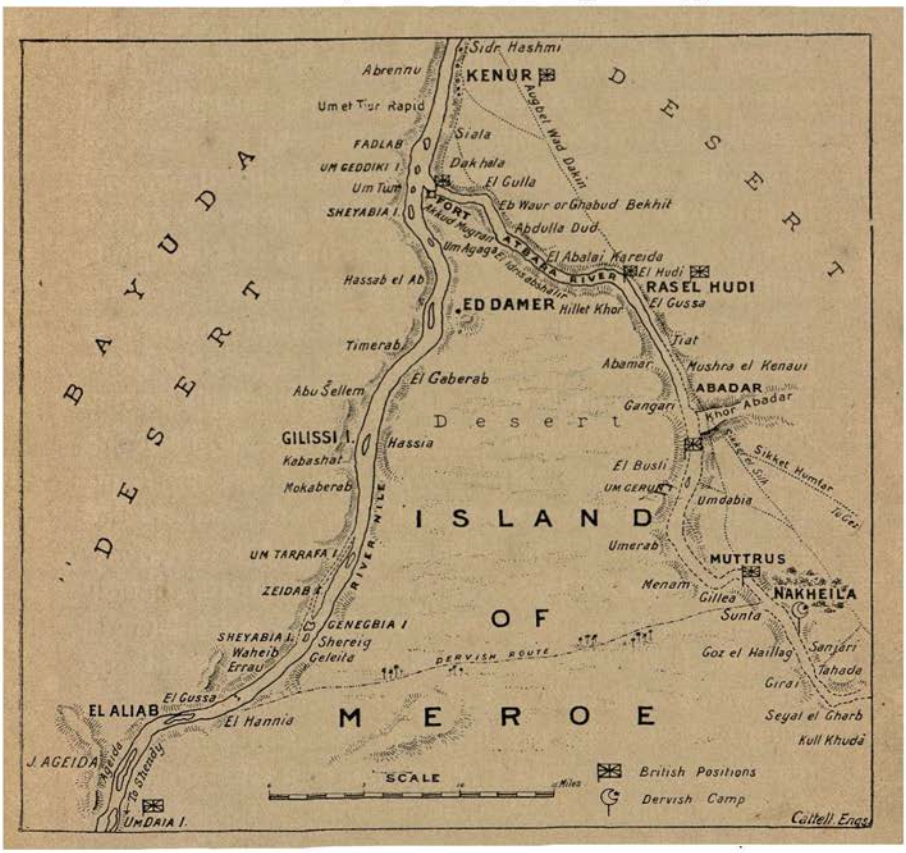
NAKHEILA, April 8, 1898.

Emir of Emirs Mahmoud and his dervish army, that came down to smite the Egyptians and sack Berber, have been completely overthrown. Mahmoud has been taken prisoner, and his men have been killed, captured, or driven as fugitives into the desert, where thousands more of them must perish of hunger and thirst. His army has ceased to exist, and the few who have escaped are not likely to add to the strength of the Khalifa's force in Omdurman. And this is the end of him who came down with great flourish to reassert the dervish supremacy over the province of Berber! Mahmoud had achieved much renown as a dervish leader. In Kordofan, Darfur, and throughout the Western Soudan, with his partly-trained warriors and superiority in rifles, he had in many a fight routed masses of savages armed with spears and swords. He was confident in his experience and strength, and sought to measure them against Egyptian soldiery, whom he and his fellow-emirs professed to despise.

Yet, truth to tell, Mahmoud did not anticipate the presence of British troops with the Sirdar's forces when he quitted Shendy to seek battle with the Egyptian army. When he learned that 'Inglesi' were with the Sirdar, he altered his tactics, and, though sorely pressed for food, awaited attack in an encampment of his own choosing, which he strengthened by various devices—hedges, trenches, pits, forts, and palisades. He surely, despite his boastings, dreaded the issue? The army he led was in sore straits in other ways, and

he had sent urgent appeals to the Khalifa for instructions and reinforcements. These he awaited, as he said, before moving further against Berber, or seeking to destroy the new railway. On Thursday, 7th April, the Sirdar's army lay in camp at Umdabiya, behind a zereba, or hedge of cut thorny mimosa bushes. Umdabiya is a deserted village of grass and mud huts. It contains the remains of rude but extensive native salt-works. Everyone in camp knew that it was intended to engage and assault Mahmoud's forces next day, for it had been given out officially. "Coming events cast their shadows before," and the eve of battle is not without significant indications. There was much furbishing of belts and cleaning of arms. I saw Egyptians, Soudanese, and British soldiers all looking carefully, almost tenderly, to their rifles. Our 'Tommies' inspected every part of the bolt action and the magazines of their Lee-Metfords, wiping away the thick coat of dust and sand which permeates everywhere in the Soudan. Many of the soldiers, though they had few or none to spare, wrapped their handkerchiefs about the breech, so that the rifles should not get dirty or clogged on the march, but be ready for instant use. The tip-filed cartridges, it had been found, did not work well in the magazines, but were apt to jam, whereas the dum-dum bullet, which has a rounded lead point, gives no trouble. Therefore it came about that the magazines were not used during the action, the rifle being employed as an ordinary breech-loader. With another system of magazine that difficulty would not have occurred.

Everything was in readiness for the advance by 3 p.m. on the 7th—yesterday. Only such transport animals as were absolutely needed to carry water, reserve ammunition, medicines, surgical appliances,



blankets, etc., were allowed to accompany the fighting force.

The British soldiers had 127 rounds of cartridges, the Egyptians and Soudanese from 100 to 150 rounds.

Each man also carried an emergency ration, and a blanket for bivouac. Very quietly, at 5 p.m., all the infantry, with the Maxims, proceeded out of camp, and, going a mile and a half in an easterly direction to get clear of the palms and bush which grew along the margin of the Atbara, halted upon the desert. Only two squadrons of cavalry and two companies of camelry were with them. The remaining six squadrons of cavalry and all the artillery (four batteries) were left in camp, to follow on at 2 a.m. By direct track, it is between seven and eight miles from Umdabiya to Nakheila village, the centre of Mahmoud's position. The troops were to be led along the open, so that they would arrive about daybreak next morning (Good-Friday), at a point a little east of the enemy's zereba. At 6 p.m. everybody was in his place, including Lieutenant Beatty, R.N., who had come up from Dakala with a 24-pound rocket tube and a detachment of Egyptian artillery. The force was formed up by brigades, General Gatacre's leading in square. Behind the British came Macdonald's brigade, then Lewis's brigade, next two companies of camelry, and lastly Maxwell's brigade. All of the commands moved in square in echelon, the intervals between each being from 300 to 500 yards. A few minutes after 6 o'clock the army silently marched off towards Muttras, another deserted village, a short four miles away. Night soon falls in the tropics. The glint of a pipe or cigarette could be seen here and there in the squares, but beyond that and the heavy trampling of the troops upon sand and gravel, there was nothing to give

warning that an army was engaged in that most difficult and risky enterprise, a night march. Captain Fitton, D.A.A.G., assisted by Abdul Azim and native guides, led the way. Our camp fires were left burning in Umdabiya, and kept alight during the whole night by friendly natives, to give any prowling dervish scouts the impression that the army had not quitted the place. When darkness had quite fallen, all that could be seen was the shadowy outline of the particular square one happened to be with, or the cold shimmer of the bayonets of the next. There was a heavy muffled sound through the night, that did not carry far, as of thousands of feet tramping slowly,—the weird potency of a dimly-seen, silent, armed force. Even when the moon rose, her light disclosed little more of the movement of the brigades, for there was a fresh breeze stirring, and the sand and dust drove by as thick as a Newfoundland fog. There were many halts *en route*, to enable the brigades to regain their true position and formation, for the lumpy, broken ground and occasional bushy wadies threw the lines and commands out of place and distance. Shortly after 9 p.m. the troops arrived at a point in the desert opposite Muttras, and about one mile from the Atbara's course, or rather pools, for the river does not flow at this season. There we halted, and the men munched their meal of bran biscuits, and emptied their water-bottles down their dusty and parched throats. The bottles were subsequently refilled from the 'fantasses,' or tanks, carried by the camels. Then the transport animals went off to the Atbara pools to drink and to replenish

the tanks for future use. Upon the bare desert the troops lay down, their arms beside them, to bivouac. Officers and men stretched themselves to rest, each in his place, ready to spring to attention. Apart from sentries and outposts placed but a few yards outside the squares, only the commanding officers and a few others who had various duties to perform remained on the alert all night. The Sirdar and staff paid a brief visit of inspection to each brigade, and thereafter the headquarters spent most of the night in Maxwell's square. At any rate I saw them there during my going to and fro to see the troops in bivouac. It was whilst walking softly, so as not to disturb light sleepers, that I overheard a sentimental Seaforth Highlander say to a comrade, "Ah, Tam, how mony thousands there are at hame across the sea thinking o' us the nicht!"—"Right, Sandy," replied his chum; "and how many millions there are that don't care a d——. Go to sleep, you fool!" And silence again fell upon that corner of the square.

Only once during the night was the repose of the soldiers in Gatacre's brigade disturbed. As often happens in such cases, the provoking cause of the slight alarm which occurred had a ridiculous origin—a 'Tommy' had troubled dreams, and bawled out in his sleep. About that palsied moment two mules had broken loose, whereupon, with commendable promptitude, one, if not two, battalions sprang to arms, the men taking their places in the ranks, as though the enemy were attacking. The whole affair lasted but a few seconds, many of us from the first suspecting it

was a false alarm, as no call nor orders had been issued, and so we did not stir from our blankets. In a minute everybody had lain down again, and all was still once more, save that the desert silence was disturbed by the strenuous sleep of dead-weary men. At 1.15 a.m. on Good-Friday the troops were quietly roused and told to fall in. The order was smartly obeyed without noise or bustle. Whilst the men slept, the moon had risen, and flooded in cold white light desert and sky. It became possible to see a considerable distance. No time was lost, the command 'Forward, march' was given, and the Sirdar's army stepped onward, making as little noise as possible. There was no smoking and no talking in the ranks to betray the presence of the army; but the rumble of the gun-carriages could not be suppressed, and the sheen of arms could not be hidden. Throughout the march, and during the brief halts to close up the ranks and distances between the brigades, there was little or no calling of words of command. The men were told what to do by signs, such as a wave of the hand, or if spoken to, it was in conversational tones that the orders were passed by the officers along the ranks. Yet the lines were as straightly 'dressed' as on barrack-parade, and the squares, British and Egyptian, kept their relative positions wonderfully well, though marching over very uneven ground. It was an army going forward with the consciousness of victory, for on every side I overheard the observation from Egyptian, Soudanese, and English, that on 8th April 1898, Khartoum, the wrongs and massacre of 1884-5, and Gordon's death

would be avenged. Nay, without exaggeration or stating anything outside of what was thought and said by officers and men, the whole army's watchword was 'Remember Gordon and Khartoum!' And, later on, none forgot, courage and resolution being soldierly qualities. Farther away from the Atbara's course into the desert the troops were led. Time dragged a little wearily during that slow, measured march. It was 3 a.m. when two miles or so off, upon our right, there suddenly sprung up a huge column of bright flame. The beacon continued burning furiously for a few minutes, and then dwindled into a patch of red light. Whether it was a signal-fire, or a group of dhoum palms carelessly ignited by some dervish patrol, none could truly say. The general opinion was that the pillar of fire was a dervish fire-warning to Mahmoud of our approach. But why a bonfire, when his scouts could, without letting us know, have ridden into his camp and privately warned him? It was felt that it did not, after all, much matter whether the enemy was forewarned or not. The troops had but little farther to go, and were already in a good position. By 4 a.m. the whole army was abreast of Mahmoud's zereba; and but a mile or so out in the desert, we could see the line of their camp fires, though they were but burning low, and smouldering for the most part. The force was halted for half-an-hour or so to rest the men, as there was still plenty of time to spare before daylight. I may state that the hours as shown by clock, given in the course of this letter, are only approximately correct. Actual time is difficult to

arrive at in the Soudan, where watches go constantly wrong, through sand and dust entering the works. The hours here furnished are those my own timepiece recorded.

Whilst the troops halted, the Sirdar again visited each of the squares, and gave his final instructions to the brigadiers commanding them. The action was to be commenced about sunrise by the artillery, who were to shell the dervish zereba for some time, after which an assault would be made. It was known that the enemy had strengthened a naturally difficult position to carry, by numerous artificial means. Our echelon of squares was dispensed with, the whole of the infantry being wheeled into attack formation. Gatacre's brigade kept its place upon the left, and the others were formed upon its right, except Lewis's brigade, which remained in support. The new disposition, reading from left to right, was:—Cameron Highlanders in line; close behind them in column of companies, on the left, six companies of Warwicks; in the centre, eight companies of Seaforth Highlanders; and upon the right, the eight companies of the Lincoln regiment. Continuing the line of Camerons were the Soudanese of Macdonald's brigade, two companies each of the 11th, 10th, and 9th battalions in line, with their remaining four companies following each behind, in column, with the 2nd battalion Egyptian in support. On Macdonald's right was Maxwell's brigade, the 14th and 12th Soudanese battalions, each with four companies continuing the line and two in support, whilst upon the extreme right was the 15th battalion and 8th battalion

Egyptian in column of companies. The artillery and Maxims accompanied the infantry, marching in rear upon the right and left, with a few guns in the intervals near the centre. As for the main body of the cavalry which came up with us about this time, with the horse artillery, their position was over half a mile away to the left, their duty being to protect that flank from the dervish horsemen. Lewis Bey's 4th and 3rd Egyptian battalions in support on our left, were also placed to secure that flank from any wild rush of Mahmoud's 4000 mounted Baggara. Two companies of camelry (of the Camel Corps) and the 7th Egyptian battalion occupied a position near the centre, but further in rear of the rest of the troops.

There was but the faintest sign of coming dawn when the Sirdar's army, in battle array, again marched onward. Gradually we drew nearer to the enemy's works. We had turned our backs to the east, and were, with measured tread, passing over the low swelling ridges that hid and sheltered the dervish lines in the bush-covered alluvial ground by the margin of the Atbara. Their camp in that respect was astutely chosen, for they could neither be seen nor effectively fired upon at any range beyond 900 yards. At such a distance their guns and rifles were almost as accurate as our own. I caught a clearer glimpse of the dervish camp fires glowing in the black shadow of the palm-trees whilst it was yet night. Shortly after 5 a.m. we saw a few dervish horsemen and the dim outlines of Mahmoud's zereba. There was a fear for a moment or two that the enemy had

vacated the place. Through my glasses I saw a few of their footmen pottering about, fifty yards in front of their zereba. There was a row of storks and huge vultures also visible, closer to us, which somebody declared was a line of the enemy's skirmishers, but I had seen too many of these carrion creatures before in the Soudan to fall into that mistake. Going a little way forward to a knoll, I was able to make out many scores of banners and hundreds of jibbeh-clad dervishes standing upon the banked earth in front of their trenches and around their forts watching us. I then knew Mahmoud meant to fight. With great deliberation the troops continued to advance, halting occasionally to lock up the formation; for the ground was more broken and uneven than before, and there were little wadies that wound in all directions, twisting and breaking the ranks. A sharp look-out was kept to see that we should not suddenly stumble upon any of our enemy concealed behind the next hollow. Herds of startled gazelle and ariel moved away to our left, apparently fearing they were about to be hemmed in. At last, with the sun just rising and full daylight near, there could be no question but that the dervishes had seen us, and knew the army was coming down upon them. There was a great stir within their encampment. Mounted men and men afoot hurried from point to point, and horsemen, with gleaming spears, began to issue in hundreds from the south corner of the zereba, and trot off to our left. No further sign was yet made by the enemy, and one by one most of those who had been standing up looking

at us stepped back and down into their trenches, disappearing from view. Further off, within the zereba, upon raised ground, groups of horsemen and camelmen still sat, evidently watching our plan of attack. One of these, wearing an emir's jibbeh and hat, and holding in his hand a huge spear, occupied a commanding position upon a raised work or fort near the centre of their lines. We could now see the long row of cut thorny mimosa forming the zereba. Four or five yards behind it rose a low palisade, made of dhoum palm logs, stuck endways in the ground, like a fence made of railway-sleepers, and serving both as a screen and an obstacle to their first or main encircling trench. Behind that, we could make out other trenches, a few squat, square forts or earthworks, and many clusters of tukals, *i.e.*, camp huts or shelters, made of palm-branches and grass. Beyond that, all was hidden in dense bush and palms. Perhaps from the front of the dervish zereba to the Atbara's steep bank the distance was 1200 yards.

The sun had now risen; it was broad daylight. There was no need to wait longer, for the enemy showed no sign of impetuously sallying out to attack us in the open, as some had hoped and said they would do. That would obviously have played into our hands, and in their many years of warfare they have learned to know better. These were no longer mad fanatical dervishes, believing they had as comrades in arms hosts of beings from the other world fighting by their side, spurring them on to win the joys of the Moslem's paradise. So orderly and peace-

ful was the array of our serried ranks that the whole glittering display might have been taken for a review or field-day, with the dervishes as onlookers, had it not been for the presence of the flocks of repulsive vultures. Indeed, for over an hour afterwards, even when our guns had opened and were destructively shelling their zereba, from our side the affair bore very much the appearance of lively autumn manœuvres. The troops went, little by little, farther forward, until

MAXIM-NORDENFELDT GUNS IN ACTION—ATBARA.

our front line occupied an almost unbroken crest that overlooked the zereba and dervish position, 800 yards or less distant. Colonel Long ran his guns to the front in the intervals between the brigades and to Maxwell's right. Captain Peake's battery of 6-centimetre Krupps took up a position to the right of the Camerons. Beyond were the mule battery, and the respective batteries of Major Lawrie's and Captain de Rougemont's new Maxim-Nordenfeldt 12½-pounder

automatic recoil guns. These short guns, almost carronades, fire a single or a double shell with great accuracy, and are wonderfully good weapons. Lieutenant Beatty, R.N., with his detachment of Egyptian gunners and 24-pounder rocket tube, set up the tripod on the left of the Krupps. At 6.15 a.m. the bombardment began. A shell from the Krupps burst well overhead in the zereba, and simultaneously a roar from the Maxim-Nordenfeldt guns, and the screech of a shrapnel which burst in the bush with a rocket-like shower, drew a restrained 'Ah!' from many throats. It was a pyrotechnic display, with the mimic element eliminated—its fireworks freighted with death. The battle had indeed commenced, with the whole of the Sirdar's army, except the artillery, as yet spectators. At the scream of the first shell every dervish footman ducked out of sight, and remained thereafter closely hidden. In a stream, the tail of the enemy's cavalry galloped swiftly out from the south side of the zereba and made off, under cover of the bush and knolls. The brave with the big spear stayed for a round or two more, but a shrapnel bursting hard by him, he too thought discretion the better part of valour, and spurred his steed into the bush. Firing the guns very deliberately, and making splendid practice, Colonel Long had the cannonading in full swing at 6.25 a.m. The zereba was being knocked about, a few of the palisades had been sent flying, and the sides of several forts blown away. A group of tukals also had been set on fire. The rocket tube was shifted farther left, to a point fifty yards in front of the Camerons, and from

there sent in flaming, screeching messengers of death. Fire and iron were being rained upon the dervishes, but they answered not, neither with shout nor shot of rifle or cannon. As the British 'Tommies' said, they were plainly lying 'doggo.' It proved them men of stern purpose, that they were able to take such punishment in silence, lying down and biding their time.

Whenever the British troops were halted, as a rule the men were told to lie down. Again and again the serried ranks of the Sirdar's army rose and shifted a trifle closer to the zereba, which at 6.45 a.m. was burning in several places. Now and then a few scattered rounds from Remingtons went singing over our heads in Gatacre's brigade, where I had naturally elected to be during the battle. But the dervish rifle-fire lasted but a second or two, and was probably the unbidden salute of some hot-blooded Mahdists. There was a movement on our left a thousand yards or more away, where our cavalry stood, as if the dervish horse were about to charge them. So far as I could see the enemy's steeds they did not number more than ten or twelve hundred, but the ground may have hidden from me many of the Baggara. The galloping Maxims with Lieutenant-Colonel Broadwood's squadron played a few disjointed bars 'pitter-patter' of lead upon the dervish horse, which sent them scampering back to shelter. Only once, later on, and under similar circumstances, had our Maxims to repeat the theme, emptying half a score or more of Baggara saddles. The bombardment continued until 7.40 a.m., when once more the enemy opened their rifle-fire from the

zereba, directing it chiefly against Maxwell's and Macdonald's men. The Maxims with the infantry gave the dervishes a taste of their quality, and matters quieted down a bit for a while. At 7 a.m. the horse artillery, not being needed with the cavalry, had come over and joined up with the other batteries, and assisted in shelling the zereba.

It was finely spectacular and grand, but somewhat wearisome, this continued bombardment. The Sirdar and Staff once more rode along the lines, and just before 8 a.m. Sir Herbert gave his final orders for the assault. As for the British brigade, the Camerons were to lead, in line, up to and then tear away the zereba, letting the three other battalions—Warwicks, Seaforths, and Lincolns—pour through their ranks to rush the rest of the enemy's position. Last 'dressings' and instructions were given by the brigadiers and commanding officers to their men. Talk of 'dressings'! each of us had received a packet from the doctors of emergency, or field dressings, or bandages. The waiting moments of tension were running out. Most of the field-officers had dismounted and sent their horses to the rear, to be led after them by orderlies. General Gatacre and his staff had dismounted, but Major-General Hunter, second in command, and Colonels Macdonald and Maxwell, remained on horseback. The Sirdar, with the Headquarters Staff, selected a central knoll about 900 yards from the zereba as their point of observation and direction. Shortly after 8 o'clock the bugles sounded the general advance. On the instant the bands of the Khedival

battalions began playing, drums and bugles went cheerily, and the pipers skirled their most stirring minstrelsy. A braver sight was not to be seen in a lifetime. An advance was begun as if in review order, but was lifted out of that staccato performance by a tremendous shout, which resounded from right to left of our lines—a brotherly challenge 'twixt white and black to intrepidity. We were in for it now! Steadily went the line of Camerons—General Gatacre, his Staff, and Colonel Money in front. More impulsive, the limber-limbed Soudanese and Egyptian battalions swung ahead of us on the right, and were already firing their rifles. Our guns had ceased firing for a few minutes before the advance actually began. The dervishes seized this opportunity to discharge a round or two of shell, and to open a brisk rifle-fire upon the assaulting troops. Gradually the enemy's fire increased, becoming each instant heavier and more deadly. But the Camerons did not flinch, nor hurry, nor bend their backs, but marched in short step, with the sober sedateness of a line intent on keeping its dressing. Halting now and again for a moment or two by the way, section volleys were fired at the dervish riflemen, whose heads were to be seen peeping out of the trenches, whilst behind them others of the enemy, newly sprung from the ground, displayed fields of spears and gleaming swords. The fire discipline, however, was so perfect in the Cameron ranks, close behind which I led my horse, that the officers ordered their men to use their own individual judgment and resort to independent firing. Long's guns and the

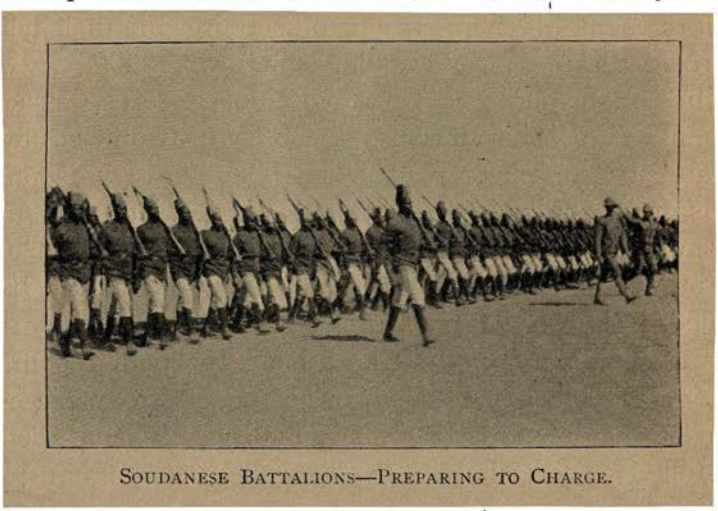
Maxims did not mean to be left behind and silent, so whenever a chance offered they slipped in between the lines, occasionally even going slightly in advance, to give the enemy shrapnel, case, and a hail of lead. And these were Egyptian gunners, too. Some of them followed the infantry up to forty yards of the zereba, though men were falling fast on all sides. On the left of the Camerons, Captain Franks, with his Maxims, kept pace with the assaulting line, and actually got his guns within the zereba, but he found the rough ground there unsuited to that arm, and so moved out to the left.

Meanwhile, I have been anticipating. The roar and heat of battle was upon the infantry, who, after all, have ever to bear the brunt of combat. By 8.15 a.m. we were 200 yards or less from the zereba; and although the dervish bullets were flying thick and fast, viciously noisy and near, and men, weltering in blood, were dropping from the ranks, steady as a moving wall the Camerons trod forward, an inspiriting sight. The stretcher-bearers and doctors were more than busy upon the field. Upon our right Macdonald's and Maxwell's brigades were in face of as fierce a fusilade, but they were also closing in upon the zereba. The Soudanese, as is their custom, were firing their Martinis furiously as they went along, occasionally halting and kneeling to take better aim, as I could see. Our Lee-Metfords gave out no smoke to obscure our front. Tramping up a pebbly slope, barely 100 yards from the zereba, a crest was at last gained in face of a terrible hail of bullets—Remingtons, repeaters,

elephant guns, and buckshot. It was as hot as that which raged for a few minutes at Tel-el-Kebir, and far more deadly. Still, stiff as ramrods, the Camerons halted for a second or two, and, firing as at target practice, partly subdued or wiped out the dervish riflemen on their immediate front. Their bullets smote the loose earth over the dervish trenches, making puffs of dust jump and fly as in a fearful hailstorm. Then there were cries of "Come on, men!" ringing shouts and cheers, as, freed from the leash, the Camerons, followed by their comrade battalions, dashed at the dervishes. Maxwell's and Macdonald's men ran forward too, and there was wild work with rifles, pistols, and bayonets, as the front rank pulled at or clambered over the zereba and palisade to get at the enemy. General Gatacre, followed by Captain Ronald Brooke of his Staff, was the first upon our front at the zereba. Seizing a bush, he tried to pull it aside. A dervish sprang from the trench to spear the General, who called out to big Private Cross, of F Company, "Give it him, my man." Cross promptly obeyed, shot and bayoneted the dervish, and turned again to help the General, who had not ceased to drag at the bush. Who can accurately tell the first man to enter the dervish zereba of the British brigade? It may or may not have been Private Taylor of the Camerons, as I have heard asserted.

In the few momentous half-seconds that intervened, whilst officers and men were making a passage through the hedge, their comrades covering them, as well as they were able, sending showers of bullets through the

palisades, and a hail of lead over and across the inner lines of trenches, hundreds of brave deeds were done. The dervish fire was so bitter, and their lines of trenches so many and so close behind the palisade, that the plan of attack had to be changed on the instant. Instead of the Camerons being halted to allow the other battalions to go through to the front, an operation which would have entailed delay and



SOUDANESE BATTALIONS—PREPARING TO CHARGE.

great loss of life, the General called upon the men to push forward. Our big Union Jack, borne on high by Staff-Sergeant Wyatt, as usual marked and directed the centre of the Camerons' line. Its bearer was mauled in the knee by a bullet from an elephant gun, and could go no further. An orderly in the Camerons gripped the staff, and, under Gatacre's direction, triumphantly carried the Union Jack forward through a storm of bullets, which left him unscathed, but

checkered the flag with holes and rents. Stubbornly clung the dervishes to their trenches, firing at us at a few paces' range. To deal better with them, the front and rear ranks fired alternately. Captain Findlay of the Camerons, with his revolver in one hand and sword in the other, sprang in safety over the palisade and first trench, although the latter was crammed two deep with dervishes. Shooting and bayoneting all before them, his men strove to keep up with their tall herculean captain, for Findlay stood over six feet two inches. He had gone but half-a-dozen yards farther when he was shot through the body in two places by Mahdists concealed in a trench but a few yards off. His men, who had been unable to protect him, took an instant vengeance upon every dervish in the trench. Truth to say, the enemy were there to kill or be killed. They gave no quarter, and rarely asked for it for themselves, fighting like beasts till death relaxed their thews. A sergeant jumped from the palisade across the five-foot of trench underneath, and then pistolled a dervish who had sprung up in front to spear him. Captain Urquhart, of the Camerons, jumped across about the same moment, and was shot from behind by a rifleman who had lain among the dying awaiting an opportunity to slay. Hearing a gun discharged so close behind him, the sergeant wheeled about and shot the dervish, and one of Urquhart's infuriated men bayoneted the treacherous foe as he fell. Urquhart received a terrible mortal wound through the body. As his men stopped to pick him up he said, "Never mind me, my lads. Go on, Com-

pany F!" General Gatacre, sword in hand, found a passage-way through the barrier. At the second trench, five paces forward, he was thrust at by a dervish spearman, but parried the blow and gave the man his sword-point. I got through at an opening in the zereba and palisade a little to the left of the Camerons' centre. The bullets were striking all around, coming from trenches and tukals, both upon our front and left. As the ground was very rough, to get a better view, I mounted my horse when just inside the zereba. Private Chalmers, of the Camerons, dashed at an emir, who was standing with flag and spear, shouting encouragingly to his tribesmen. The dervishes had met the shout of our advance, as we closed at the charge, with answering cries of "Allah, el Allah, el Akbar!" but later their voices were stilled, though they fought doggedly on. Chalmers found the emir nothing loth to cross steel. There was a rapid parry and a thrust, and the dervish fell, gripping wildly at Chalmers' rifle, whilst the Cameron tore the battle-banner from his enemy's nerveless grasp. It was impossible to keep in line once inside the zereba. There were too many trenches and pit-holes to shelter the dervish transport animals, for the men to march forward shoulder to shoulder. Our advance was a series of more or less broken rushes against trenches, forts, tukals, and inner zerebas. It would have been madness, under the circumstances, to have insisted on the troops going forward slowly and in a well-kept line. Their ardour and courage made every Tommy more than a match for the best dervish of Mahmoud's

army. On the Cameron right there was difficulty in getting the dervishes out of some tukals. The soldiers tried to fire the huts, but their officers stopped them at once. There was dust and smoke enough.

In the scramble through the zereba a company of the Lincolns, led by Colonel Verner, their commanding officer, got through a gap on the right of the Camerons' line, between them and Macdonald's men. Something similar happened nearer the centre, where a company of the Seaforths pressed in. Then the British brigade, with the Camerons still nominally in line, and the others as wedges, forced their way, amid fire, dust, and heat, through the enemy's position. In every tukal and trench dervishes were hidden, firing at us openly or covertly, or rushing out from amongst groups of their wounded to shoot or cut down a soldier. It was furious and ticklish work, as of clearing out by hand a hive of hornets. Sergeant-major Mackay, of the Seaforths, had a marvellous escape in jumping the palisade. A spearman made a furious drive at him whilst he was in mid-air and rent his kilt in twain. Mackay turned upon him angrily and gave his enemy pistol and claymore together. Lieutenant Gore, of the Seaforths, was killed a few minutes later. We were winning our way step by step, but over the enemy's dead and dying. Lieutenant Boxer, of the Lincolns, who with Gore had passed the last evening at Abadar in my tent, where both were happy to learn that the dreary camping-ground was to be left for a battlefield, was badly hit in the leg. Colonel Murray, of the Seaforths, had a narrow shave, a dervish rushing

out of a tukal and firing at him. Missing the Colonel, the creature threw up his hands in token of surrender, but that was not thought to be playing the game fairly, and the dervish was without parley bowled over with a Seaforth's Lee-Metford. Subsequently Colonel Murray was shot through the left forearm by a No. 12 round ball, fired from a fowling-piece. Colonel Verner, of the Lincolns, had two singular mishaps, either of which came near enough being fatal. A bullet cut his helmet-strap and grazed his cheek; another shot struck him in the mouth, gouging away part of his upper lip. He refused to retire, following his men through to the river-bank. Sergeant Malone, of the Lincolns, went down, shot through the head. We passed several of the enemy's small interior forts, inside of each of which was a brass rifled gun and from twenty to forty riflemen. Every one of these works had to be carried and all their defenders slain, for the fighting became if possible even more desperate the farther we got. The troops were not to be checked, however, by any number of dervishes, and steadily they pushed on towards the Atbara's bank.

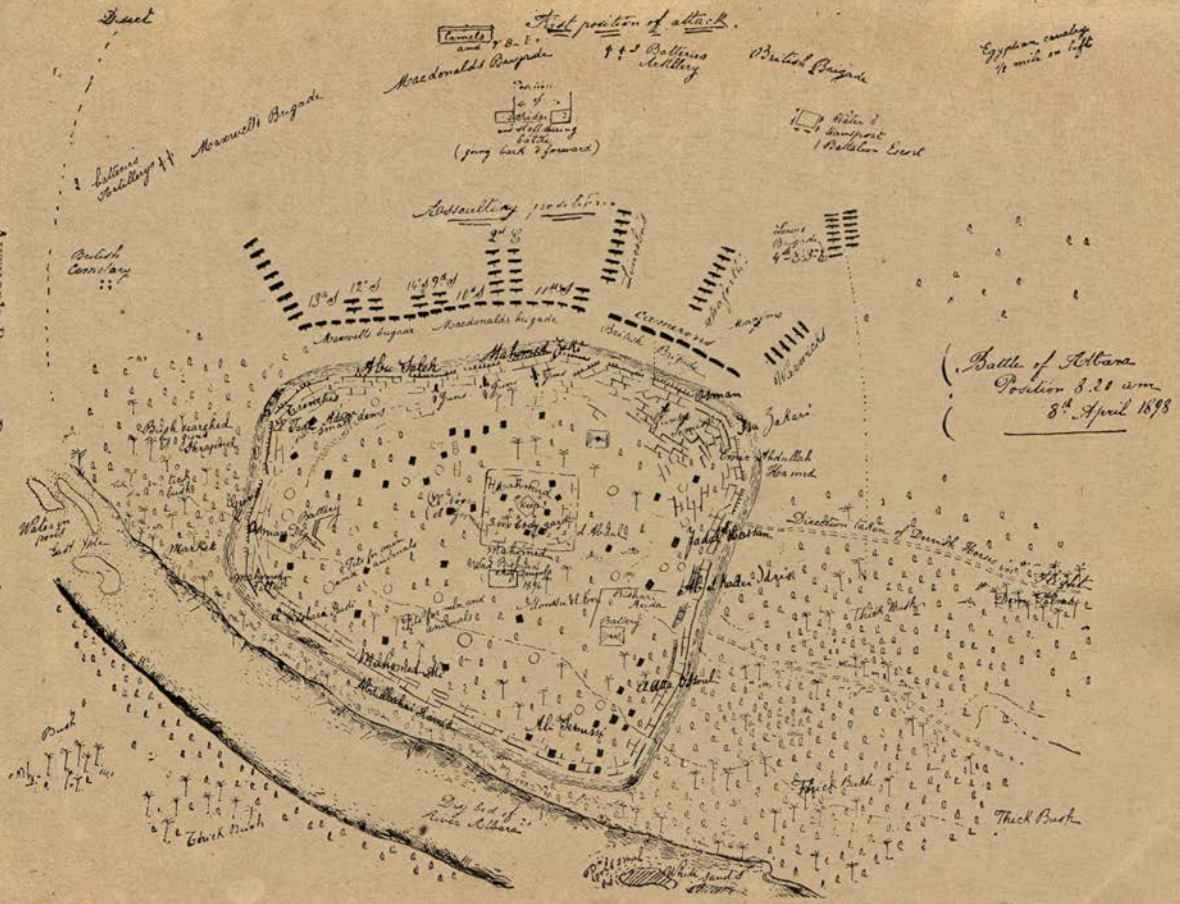
Away upon our right, Major-General Hunter had ridden in advance of the Egyptian and Soudanese troops, waving his helmet and sword, and calling them on. The blacks responded with charmed alacrity, their brigadiers and English officers in the forefront leading them. Although relatively their officers did not lose heavily, the rank-and-file suffered greatly. Their bravery and daring deserves every praise. Yet let it never be too hastily assumed that the

measure of casualties is a sure gauge of the fierceness of an enemy's resistance. Major Townsend of the 12th Soudanese stalked far in front of his men, a stick in one hand, and his revolver in the other. "Bravo, Townsend!" cried General Hunter; an observation subsequently repeated by the Sirdar. Yet he, and Colonel Macdonald, had practically risen from sickbeds to lead them in battle. Majors Walter and Jackson, respectively of the 9th and 11th Soudanese, had much hard fighting, as had also the 10th black battalion. During the bombardment we had seen camels, horses, and donkeys moving about within the zereba, and many of these had been wofully hit by the shell-fire. Within the enemy's works it was not only rows of dead and dying dervishes that were strewn about, but hundreds of animals, tethered in pits and trenches, were the victims of the awful accuracy of our shell-fire. Only once was something like a temporary check experienced. That was when the troops had all but gained the high ground in the middle of the zereba. From an inner zereba, tukals, bush, and a fort, a rifle-fire of great intensity was sprung upon us. The 11th Soudanese, the Camerons, and the Seaforths were the first upon whom burst the fury of this blast. It was Mahmoud's inner dem, or keep, that we had run full against, and the place was held by two thousand or more of his specially chosen followers. A company of the 11th Soudanese, without the least hesitation, tried to rush the north-west corner. Before a storm of bullets, the company was all but annihilated, losing nearly

100 men in killed and wounded and several officers. Other companies of the brave 11th Blacks sprang forward and charged home. Piper Stewart, of F company Camerons, leaped upon a knoll, playing loudly the "March of the Cameron Men." Bullets rained around him, but he only blew the harder, until, a minute later, he fell before the bitter dervish fire, pierced through and through by seven wounds. Several of the Seaforth pipers had narrow escapes whilst they marched together at the head of the column, playing "Cabar-Feihd." During the cannonade they had gone up and down the lines, playing "The Mackenzie." The deadly aim of the British troops mowed down the dervishes, and Gatacre's brigade, pressing forward, firing and thrusting without halting, turned the position. Colonel Verner had to use his sword and revolver to save himself several times. Once beyond the dem of Mahmoud, the dervishes popped up and began to steal off towards the Atbara. But the Lee-Metfords rang fiercely as ever, and hundreds never gained the Atbara's precipitous bank and shelter. Under cover of the bank, a very brief stand was made by a few of the enemy's riflemen, but the 'Tommies' forged through the thick mimosa and palms with a shout, and the position was won, and with it the victory of the Atbara. Firing, however, still went on a little longer, for there were dervishes in hiding down the 30ft. bank, and to right and left, who had to be dealt with. Bands of them also were running the gauntlet of the men's fire across the four hundred yards of white sand that

formed the whilom river's bed. The crack shots crowded to the banks and potted the runaways. A private of the Lincolns, with unerring aim, hit four of the fugitives in succession. There were others who ran with the fleetness of deer to the south, but not so fast as the Lee-Metford bullets. As for Mahmoud's horsemen, they hurriedly headed south up the Atbara banks when they saw our infantry carry the first lines of their trenches. In the storm and stress of the assault about a dozen slave women were shot, but half a hundred we managed to save alive. The dust and smoke whirled in clouds, and in trenches or in a pit it is difficult to distinguish a native woman from a man. I had the good fortune to descry a group of these women and a child sheltering amongst some wounded and unwounded dervishes in a short trench. Calling the attention of a Cameron officer to the fact that there were women there, they were easily rescued. Mahmoud's ruthless cruelty was terribly in evidence in his zereba. Numbers of manacled blacks were found dead in the trenches. These poor wretches had been chained by both hands and legs, and put there with guns in their hands to fight and be killed. There was no escape for them. We saw others, but too late to save them, handcuffed in rows, who had been placed in the forefront of the works and compelled to use rifles against us. And yet more pitiful, three or more hapless prisoners were found in chains and with forked sticks upon their necks, stretched lifeless in the open between the trenches, and before Mahmoud's dem.

The battle was over. The final advance of the troops to storm the position, or the rush forward, until it was completely carried, occupied twenty-four to twenty-six minutes. It only remained to gather in the wounded and dead of our side, count the losses and the gain. At the Atbara's margin there was a rare scene of welcome and congratulation when the Soudanese and the British met. Camerons, Lincolns, and Seaforths had, in response to whistle and call, ceased firing at the fugitives. Companies of the Soudanese came up on our right a minute or two later and opened a short, terrible fusilade upon such of the fugitives as were still to be seen, until the last of them had dropped or disappeared up the banks and into the bush. Then the firing ceased, and the Soudanese, dancing with delight, ran in amongst the British, cheering, waving their rifles aloft, and with their big fists shaking hands with the 'Tommies.' It was a meeting never to be forgotten I was spectator of. Mr Atkins returned their enthusiastic greeting quite as warmly in his own way, hurrahing for the Soudanese and Egyptian troops. Brothers in arms, blacks and whites, their fraternal unity had been cemented by mutual goodwill and close companionship in danger, which must be helpful in any future Soudan campaign. As 'Tommy' himself has been overheard since to say, "These bally blacks, after all, can fight a bit, you bet." A brief halt was made by the Atbara's brink, then the men were re-formed and marched back, out of Mahmoud's works. On my way back through the zereba, the extent of the damage became more



AUTHOR'S PLAN OF BATTLE OF THE ATBARA.

apparent. The dead were lying about everywhere. A few wounded dervishes were crawling out from hiding-places, mostly seeking and obtaining quarter.

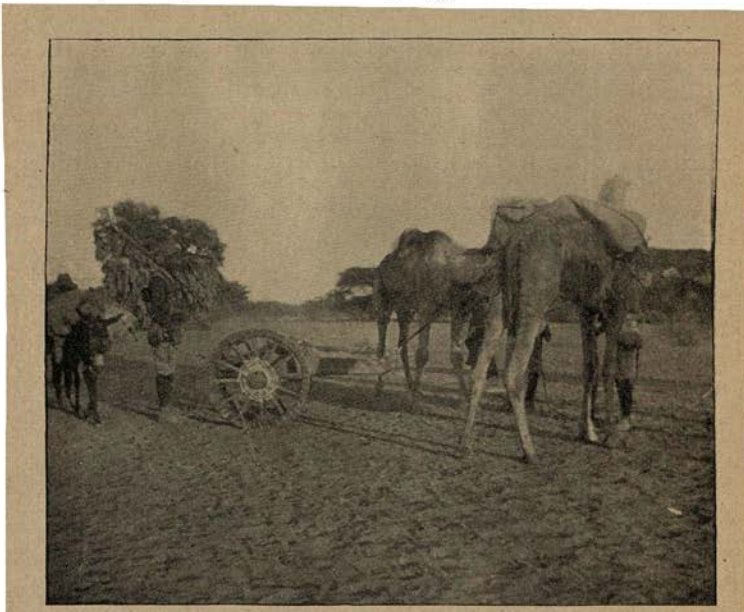
As the troops were returning through the zereba towards the open desert, the Sirdar and staff rode up, and were saluted with most thunderous cheering from the whole army. The blacks and Egyptians roared as if to burst their lungs, and the British hurrahed loudly and long. Helmets and tarbooshes were waved aloft on the end of rifles, and for once the Sirdar showed himself much 'moved by the warmth of the soldiers' welcome and congratulation. He halted and said a few words, thanking them for the gallant and unflinching manner in which they had done their duty, and won a signal victory over a fierce enemy. Ultimately the troops were re-formed in brigade squares to the right of the ground where the attack had commenced. Then the Sirdar inspected them, and spoke again to officers and men in terms of praise and thanks for their signal dash and courage in achieving so complete a triumph. Numbers of men were detailed from each brigade to search the zereba thoroughly, whilst others proceeded to fill their water-bottles and bathe in the Atbara pools. I noticed the Soudanese reverently covered with cloth the faces of such negro women and children as were accidentally killed in the pits and trenches, and buried them. One dervish met with a fearful death, for he stood pinned, a corpse, to the thick trunk of a dhoum palm by a rocket which had passed through his chest. The Sirdar was penning his despatches when a guard of half-a-dozen men and

sergeant of the 10th battalion Soudanese came up with a stalwart, bare-headed, dervish prisoner, who was wearing an emir's ornate jibbeh. An officer galloped up with the news that the captive was none other than Mahmoud himself. He approached, slightly limping, his short baggy cotton drawers smeared with blood from a bayonet prod. A tall native, standing some 6ft., as much negroid as Arab in feature, with a thin tuft of hair on his chin, a man of about thirty years of age—this was the Taaisha Baggara, and nephew of the Khalifa, the supposed truculent dervish General. He held his head up and scowled at his guard. The Sirdar and General Hunter wheeled round, and Mahmoud was brought before them. I was an onlooker. "This is the Sirdar," said General Hunter, indicating Sir Herbert Kitchener. General Hunter spoke quite angrily, for he was vexed at the Baggara leader's assumed indifference; besides, he held in fine contempt the brutal and cruel Taaisha chief. Mahmoud paid no special attention. "Sit down," quietly said the Sirdar to him, which, in Eastern parlance, was rather an ominous beginning for Mahmoud—an omen of death. "Why have you come into my country, to burn and to kill?" said the Sirdar. "I have to obey the Khalifa's orders, as a soldier, without question, as so must you the Khedive's," replied Mahmoud, speaking for the first time. A few other queries followed respecting his men and emirs, to which Mahmoud replied curtly. "Where is Osman Digna?" was next asked. It was the only question I prompted, and was anxious about. "I don't know," said Mahmoud.

"He was not in the fight; he went away with my cavalry. Yes, all the rest of my emirs stayed with me. I saw your troops about five in the morning, and instantly mounted my horse and rode round the camp, seeing that all were in their assigned places. Then I returned to my dem and waited. I am not a woman, to run away." Mahmoud was removed in custody of the 10th Soudanese, together with two young lads, said to be his cousins. For all his vaunting, Mahmoud was found hiding in a sort of cave, which he had hollowed out under a bed. His capture was effected by the blacks whilst searching the enemy's camp. Emir Senussi, who it appears was with him at the moment, was first detected and shot. Mahmoud might have shared his fate, had not a dervish lad called out that the Emir was there, when Captain Franks, of the Maxims, came up and assisted in having him hauled out alive, together with one of the lads.

Our total casualties were over 500. The numbers were variously given as 510 and 524, owing to the difficulty of getting an accurate roll from the native regiments. In Gatacre's brigade the total killed and wounded was 124. Of the four regiments engaged, the Camerons lost most heavily, although I found that statement of mine questioned and rebutted earlier in the day. Their casualties were 58, including two officers and ten men killed. Major Napier was among the wounded. Of the British troops, the Seaforths—who next to the Camerons suffered most—had 31 casualties, including Lieutenant Gore and six men killed, and five officers wounded. Of the Lincolns,

three men were killed, and three officers and fourteen men were wounded. The remaining British casualties fell among the Warwicks, who had only one officer, Lieutenant Greer, wounded, and two men killed. Of the enemy, over 2000 dead were counted within the zereba, and 500 more were lying close around near the



ONE OF THE CAPTURED DERVISH GUNS—ATBARA.

south end of the zereba and upon the Atbara sands. It would not be an exaggerated estimate to say the enemy lost about 3000 in killed, and fully as many more in wounded, who, however, got off into the bush. Many of these, as well as those unhurt, must die in trying to make their way back to Khartoum, whether they attempt to travel *via* Shendy or by Abu Dalek.

Mahmoud's army had been destroyed past reconstruction. Prisoners were being brought in by hundreds, and possibly within the next two days over 2000 will have been secured. Our cavalry were kept in hand till the battle was won, for there was an apprehension at headquarters that all Mahmoud's cavalry were lurking about, and would attempt to rush our infantry during the assault. When the fight was over, they were sent in pursuit of the enemy's horse. The dervish horsemen had too long a start, so Broadwood's squadrons only followed on their trail for two miles, where it ran into the thick bush on the far side of the Atbara. There the Baggara evidently scattered in all directions, mostly heading for Aderamat. Apparently they were going back to Omdurman by way of Abu Dalek. That afternoon there was a funeral service over the British dead, who were buried beside a clump of palms by their sorrowing comrades. Lewis's brigade was left to guard the captured stores, and to secure any dervishes who might come in. Ere nightfall, with many flags, cannon, spears, and swords that had been taken from the enemy, the three brigades—Maxwell's, Macdonald's, and Gatacre's, in the order named—marched back to Umdabiya, carrying the wounded with them.

CHAPTER XV.

The Importance of the Victory.—Mahmoud's Views.

No battle is ever lost or won until the dead and the fruits of victory are taken account of. I formed a hurried and fairly accurate estimate upon the field of our own and the enemy's losses, but the rules of the military censorship did not permit the transmission of my figures. My conclusion was, that the total casualties were about 500, and that the Camerons had lost more heavily than any of the other British battalions, their killed and wounded being over 50. It is perhaps after all a merciful regulation that breaks news of loss and suffering by degrees, for there are always tender hearts at home to be wrung, on too suddenly learning that the names of those near and dear to them are in the casualty returns. I confess that I never like to be first to wire or write, giving information of the death of any person. The sad task better fits the official or military bulletin, except in special instances, such as where the public interest overweighs those of the few. Even the military bulletins usually are framed to err upon the humane side. Names are often kept back for a time, or wires

forwarded that so-and-so is dangerously wounded, when he has been killed outright, and reported amongst the early dead.

I have not yet succeeded in obtaining an absolutely reliable statement of the total casualties that occurred upon our side. One reason is, the difficulty in finding out what was the actual number of wounded the native regiments had. Your Soudan soldier makes light of his wounds for a week or so, or until they become too troublesome, preferring to be about among his fellows and do his own doctoring in a rough fashion. It may be taken as approximately accurate that the total loss in killed and wounded of the whole force was between 500 and 600. The killed were fully one-fifth of the larger figure. In the British brigade the total casualties were 128 or 130, the Camerons having had 61 of that number. Upon the field there perished, of Gatacre's command, three officers—Captains Urquhart and Findlay and Lieutenant Gore—and ten, or rather twelve men, for two died shortly after the action. There were ten officers wounded belonging to the command, of whom several have since died, as well as a number of rank and file, thereby further augmenting the death-roll. Of British officers and non-commissioned officers serving in the Khedival forces about ten also were wounded. An almost full list of these, as well as of nearly all the other officers hit, is given in the Sirdar's despatches. The enemy left about 3000 dead upon the field, including all their chief emirs or leaders, except Osman Digna who escaped, and Mahmoud who was captured. Then there is the

percentage of dervish wounded to be reckoned, who managed to crawl into the bush across the Atbara. Mahdist doctoring at its best is crude, rough, and deadly. The dervish 'hakeem,' or medical men, have for instruments a knife, a small spear-shaped lancet, and long tweezers for forceps. Their cauteries are red-hot iron, boiling resins or fats, and their medicines a few simples and charms. Cures are best effected not by 'laying on,' but keeping hands off the patients. The Arabs and negroes are of healthy habit, and are bravely patient under suffering, so that they heal readily of wounds that would kill an ordinary European. Nearly all of the dervish wounded at the Atbara action must have died, as thousands of even the unwounded who escaped did, in striving to make their way back without food or water across the desert to Aliab and Shendy. Again, most of the fugitives who ultimately reached Aliab and Shendy were captured or surrendered, or were killed by the Jaalin, who were persistent in the pursuit of the enemy. I assume, therefore, that but a few thousands of Mahmoud's army ever escaped back to Omdurman ; that, in fact, the force was destroyed. Besides, nearly all their arms, ammunition, transport and other equipment fell into the Sirdar's possession.

Mahmoud, it is true, had no great store of provisions, but in other respects his camp was well provided. There were plenty of ammunition, pickaxes and spades for making entrenchments, cooking-utensils, clothing, arms and armour. In none of the dervish camps has there been found a larger quantity of swords, spears,

and splendid chain-armour than was secured in that of Mahmoud at Nakheila. Although there were a greater number of Mahdist banners taken at Abu Klea, there were enough and to spare captured on the Atbara. Mahmoud's interior forts were really stout, little mud-walled block-houses. Each work was armed with a brass-rifled seven-pounder howitzer, and loop-holed besides for rifle-fire. Three of his howitzers were, however, in position in the trenches facing the desert from which our attack was delivered, and were protected by an earthwork. Our shell-fire and tip-filed bullets made apparently ghastly wounds. The zereba was a veritable shambles, and by four in the afternoon, under the glaring sunshine, it had become nigh overpoweringly offensive. It was when the brigades had been marched out of the enemy's zereba, and back almost to the point whence they started to deliver the assault, that Mahmoud was taken. Detachments from each brigade had been detailed to search the enemy's camp. These parties were, as usual, assisted by numerous volunteers, servants, and followers. Moving about in Mahmoud's 'dem' or compounds, a party of the 10th battalion (Soudanese) saw a dervish issuing from a pit or cellar, the entrance to which was partly covered by matting and a bed. Possibly believing he was, after his kind, trying to run amuck among them, he was instantly shot and bayoneted. An unarmed lad in dervish uniform made his appearance at the mouth of the hole and begged them not to shoot, stating that his master was alive inside. Seeing a white officer near, Major

Franks, he appealed to him, and that gentleman pluckily intervened. Thereupon it was discovered, as the hiding-place was cleared out, that Mahmoud himself had taken shelter there. The dervish who was killed was none other than Emir Senussi, his chief of staff, and the lad who saved him was his cousin or nephew, and personal attendant. Another lad who was in the pit was got out unhurt, and far within were found three dead dervishes. It speaks well for the discipline of the blacks, that though many of them had old and terrible family scores to settle with Mahmoud, once he was got out, he escaped from their hands with nothing worse than their reviling and bitter chaff. I had finished my first telegraphic despatch, and was waiting for the censor's approval and sign-manual, when the Rev. Father Brindle, a veteran campaigner and friend, kindly called my attention to the fact that Mahmoud had been caught. As the prisoner came limping along over the rough pebbles, I went forward to meet him, and he gave me the impression of a man who thought that his last hour had come. He was dazed, and yet dogged, when brought before the Sirdar.

The living have ordinarily no patience with the dead: it was felt that the sooner we got away from Nakheila the better. There were the wounded to be attended to, and the doctors were short-handed, although Surgeon-Colonel Gallwey, P.M.O. of the Egyptian force, and Surgeon-Major Macnamara, and their staffs, worked untiringly. The enemy's dead lay about everywhere, in and out of the zereba. They

PORTRAIT OF MAHMOUD, SIGNED BY HIMSELF—ATBARA.

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were scattered about the dry watercourse of the Atbara and the edge of its pools. It was impossible to collect and bury them all. Those in the trenches could be covered up, but there were the thousand and odd dead camels, horses, and donkeys to be disposed of. Numbers of newly-made graves outside the dervish camp bore silent but powerful testimony to the large mortality that had occurred among the enemy before our arrival upon the scene. Want of proper nourishment, crowded together in a shockingly insanitary zereba, their sick and death rate must have been very high. As for our own dead, British and Khedival troops, these were gathered together and laid in rows. Their numbers and names were taken, and their surviving comrades covered or rolled each body in a soldier's rough brown blanket. The natives, fellaheen and Soudanese, were buried together in trenches dug outside the zereba, and the British dead, officers and men, were laid to rest in an extemporised graveyard at the edge of the bush, on the northern side of the zereba. It was in the afternoon when the funeral took place. The Sirdar and Staff, Major-General Hunter and Staff, Major-General Gatacre and Staff, and all the principal officers of the brigades, as well as large numbers of the men, in addition to the burial parties, attended the obsequies. Religious services were conducted by the chaplains—Rev. J. Sims, Presbyterian; Rev. A. W. B. Watson, Anglican; and the Rev. Father R. Brindle, Roman Catholic. As the majority of the slain belonged to the Presbyterian faith, the Rev. J. Sims had the chief conduct of the service.

Prayers were also offered by the Rev. A. W. B. Watson and the Rev. Father Brindle. There was no firing-party, and indeed the funeral was conducted in a solemn manner, well befitting the occasion. Those who died later in the afternoon, before the troops moved off, were subsequently interred in the same place. A strong and dense zereba was erected around, not so much to keep wild animals off—were there not enough bodies lying exposed?—as to mark and preserve the burial-place. That done, the living went their way; the dead had finished their work, and we were heirs of their glory and the fruits of their victory.

I have indicated how quickly the dead are a troublous burden. Once the victory was won, the common natural appetites reasserted themselves. Men recollected that the day was exceedingly sultry, and that they were dreadfully thirsty. Then they strolled about the enemy's zereba, or hastened down to the Atbara's pools to drink and to wash, so great was their need. Even where dead dervishes cumbered the water's margin, and human blood stained the sands and shallows, they laved and drank. Thereafter, something like a meal was extemporised, and they had hot tea or hot soup from their canteens, and the 'Tommies' felt more comfortable, and became colloquial again. It had been intended that Gatacre's brigade should have started to march back about 4 p.m., but as the men were tired, and the day was so very warm, their departure was postponed until the cool of evening had set in. A large field-hospital had been erected, away in the outer shade of the bush, the

mimosa, and dhoum palms. In the lines of the Egyptians and Soudanese there were sounds of rejoicing. The fellaheen were chanting in their measured fashion, to the usual accompaniment of much clapping of palms. As for the blacks, they were jubilant and gay. The tom-toms, with ex-bully-beef tins, were craftily beaten, made to pulsate wildly,—a maddening rhythmic iteration. All the while, weird melodies were being sung; so, small wonder that numbers of those simple children of nature took to capering, dancing, and shouting. In the midst of them dervish prisoners, most of them blacks and countrymen of their own, sat and looked smilingly on, almost ready, I fancied, to join in the fun. Not far removed from Maxwell's and Macdonald's men, a sort of fair was being held by the camp-followers and natives, whereat captured dervish provisions and curios were being bartered. The strange scene was one fit for a Hogarthian pencil or brush.

Ere the sun had set on that Good-Friday of last April, the Sirdar and most of his victorious army were on the return march to the Nile. The 9th Soudanese battalion left at 4.30 p.m., carrying many of the British as well as their own wounded. They were accompanied by the camel transport, carrying others. The convoy was bound for Dakala camp, which it was timed to reach on the evening of the 10th April—the following Sunday. It was a long and trying journey, but the plucky fellows, with their charges, got through in time. The more seriously wounded were taken back more slowly. Many of the officers were operated

upon at Abadar, on the way down. At Dakala the wounded could be placed in the large cool huts of the base hospital there, or get transferred by steamer direct to Berber, and on to Wady Halfa by portage, steamer, and train. Other native battalions also assisted to carry the wounded to Dakala, quitting Nakheila about the same hour. Subsequently all of the battalions, except one of Lewis's brigade, marched off, going back by easy stages to their former quarters upon the banks of the Nile. Gatacre's brigade and Maxwell's men proceeded to Darmali camps. Macdonald's brigade went to Berber, and Lewis's command to the entrenched camp at Dakala. Lewis's men were again the rear-guard. The battalion left upon the field remained at Nakheila all night. A further and more careful scrutiny of the zereba was made by them, and all the dervish arms and accoutrements of any value were destroyed or carried away. A number of the enemy, as was anticipated, came in and surrendered. Then Mahmoud's zereba was left, with its heaped dead, to the wild creatures—the birds and the beasts of the field.

It was reported that the four batteries of artillery in action fired 1400 rounds during the engagement. The number discharged by the Maxims was not as great as in the fight when the cavalry were so tightly pressed. On that occasion 6000 rounds were used against the enemy. The casualties among the artillerymen upon the field on the 8th of April were a score wounded and six killed. Our cannon and Maxims were throughout admirably served; and during

the action, the skill and hardihood of the artillerymen, in keeping almost abreast of the infantry in the preliminary advance of the assaulting columns, served to assure our success. In the carrying of the zereba, its trenches, huts, and forts, the leading lines passed on and took no notice of the enemy's skulkers, who lurked in tukals or hid among the dead and wounded. These the troops following dealt with, so that there were few of those former rushes of apparently dead men from trenches that had been passed over, to cut down the troops who had mercifully spared them. All of the principal dervish dead were identified by the clerk of the Vakil of Shendy and Hosh Ben Naga. His master was captured during the attack made on that place by the gunboats and the 15th battalion under Major Hickman, and the clerk, glad to be freed from the dervishes, surrendered.

Laden with barbaric booty and trophies of war, the troops marched back. The ten captured dervish brass howitzers were distributed among the brigades, and were dragged in triumph to the Nile camps. I rode in, during the evening of Friday, to Umdabiya, and having been too busy writing and sending off despatches, had lost my servants, who had left the zereba at Umdabiya before I arrived. I gladly accepted a hospitable invitation from the cavalry officers' mess to dinner, and so did not, after all, bivouac hungry and blanketless upon the bare ground. After the battle, the Sirdar having written his despatch announcing the victory, it was carried by Captain Manifold, R.E., on horseback into Dakala, and from there wired

home. Captain Manifold had provided himself with remounts on the way, so as to accomplish the journey down in a few hours. He was also the bearer of instructions for the patrolling gunboats to proceed up to Aliab and Shendy, to secure all fugitives from Mahmoud's army arriving at those places. Next day I continued my journey, going as far as Abadar. Numbers of Greek traders and natives, already informed of the result of the battle, had arrived, and were driving a brisk trade in small commodities and tinned provisions, within the entrenched commissariat zereba. My servants, instead of returning to our old camping-ground, had settled down, gracious knew where. I hunted about for them until nearly 11 p.m., and then needing rest, without blanket or overcoat, lay down upon the dusty beaten camp ground to sleep. Towards daybreak it became extremely cold, so I was perforce an early riser. I wandered off to a camp fire to get some warmth. The sun was high before I found the rascals. They had all been too busy looting and bartering and caring for themselves, to think of me or my plight. In quick time I had a meal, and got my blanket and a few things and strapped them to my horse's saddle, resolved, extra weight or no, never to be parted with them again in the field. I had made provision for myself in the advance, but had turned the things over to Robeia when he started for Dakala.

Saturday was given as a day of rest at Abadar camp to the British brigade and some of the other troops. Meanwhile, the wounded and the stores were being sent ahead to Hudi. On Sunday morning

there were church-parades of Gatacre's battalions which partook of the nature of thanksgiving services. All who were able to do so attended. When 'church' was over, the British brigade was paraded and formed into square. The Sirdar then read to the men a telegram received from the Queen, worded as follows :—"I greatly rejoice at brilliant victory. Desire to be fully informed as to state of wounded." On the call of the Sirdar, loud cheers were given for Her Majesty. A longer despatch from the Khedive was also read. It congratulated the army upon their brilliant victory over a stubborn foe, and expressed the deepest regret at the heavy loss sustained by the British troops. His Highness further added an expression of his earnest hopes that a speedy recovery might be the lot of all the wounded. Three hearty cheers were likewise given for the Khedive. It was stated that congratulatory telegrams had also been re-received from Lord Salisbury, from the Right Hon. A. J. Balfour, on behalf of Her Majesty's Government, from Lord Lansdowne, Secretary of State for War, from Lord Cromer, from Lord Wolseley, from General Sir Francis Grenfell, from the Egyptian Minister of War, from the German Emperor, and others. Then the Sirdar again thanked his men for their gallantry, adding—"Everybody, in short, who cares about us, is extremely proud of your conduct in the field." Cheers were afterwards raised for the Sirdar, for General Gatacre, and other British officers.

Meanwhile, the wounded and the baggage were going forward towards the Nile. On Sunday Abadar camp

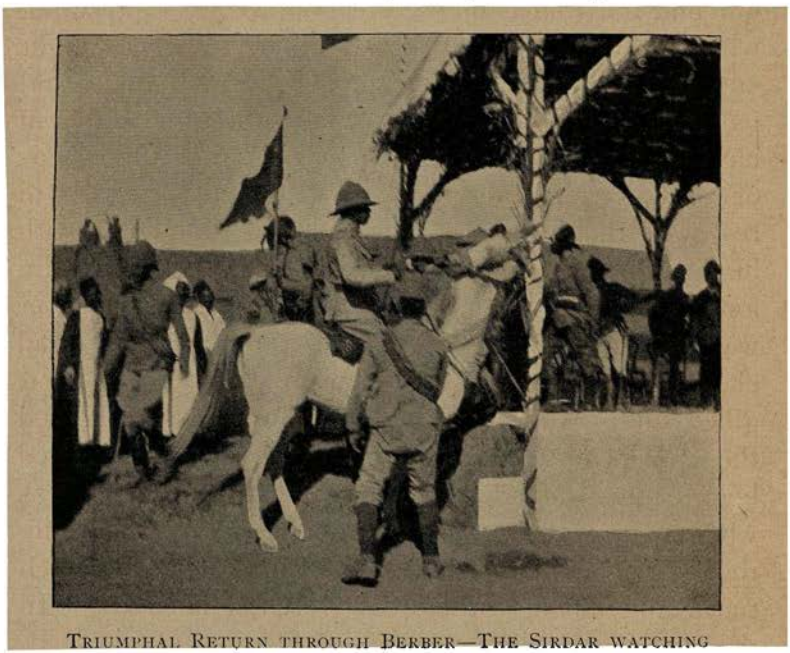
was in its turn abandoned by the rest of the troops. Riding ahead, I reached Hudi, where, during the heat of noon, most of the wounded were resting, reposing under tents and shelters. In the temporary hospital at that place, Major Napier, Captain Baillie, Lieutenant Vandeleur, amongst the dangerous cases, besides others, native and British, had their wounds seen to. A number of operations had to be conducted at that stage. Halting but an hour, I resumed my journey, and got into Dakala that same afternoon. The convoy with the wounded, as arranged, came in later, and the men were speedily placed in the comfortably equipped huts and tents of the base hospital. There they were almost as well provided for as if they had been at Wady Halfa or Cairo. For myself, I was fortunate in meeting a good friend in Mr Morgan, agent of Mortimer & Co., and secured quarters on board his giassa, or otherwise I should have again been left out in the cold, for the camp was crowded. The Sirdar and staff were among those expected in at any moment. At Dakala there was a foretaste of the popular jubilation over the victory. The news had already spread up and down the Nile, and was doubtless known in Omdurman. There was a sound of tom-toming in the air, wafted loudly on every breeze that rippled the surface of the great river. The women's shrill notes mingled in the pæan at deliverance from dervish misrule. All who came from the front were greeted with welcoming cries by the natives. The very Greek traders displayed unusual delight. When the Sirdar arrived, his progress was heralded

with shouts. He visited all the wounded on the way to Dakala, went the round of the hospitals there, and on Tuesday the 13th April started back to Berber. The villagers *en route* turned out to meet him, and deputations of natives in hundreds awaited his coming to thank him. His formal entry into Berber at the

NATIVE NOTABLES WELCOMING THE SIRDAR'S RETURN.

head of Macdonald's brigade was the fitting sequel to the victory. It was turned into a triumphal return march. Berber was *en fête*. The long main thoroughfare was lined with palm-trees, spanned with flags and bannerets. Where they came from, the Arabs alone knew. But they are adepts at working up calico drapery, and even in those remote parts the whir

and rattle of the sewing-machine is daily to be heard. Every dwelling-house and store was decorated, all of them prettily, and some with exceptionally good taste. Of appropriate mottoes, too, in English and Arabic, there was no lack. A triumphal stand had been erected near the central open space. Upon a wide



TRIUMPHAL RETURN THROUGH BERBER—THE SIRDAR WATCHING PROCESSION.

banner spanning the roadway was written, "God keep and bless the Sirdar Kitchener, Hunter-Pasha, and General Gatacre." The head of the column arrived upon the outskirts of the town about 6 a.m. Natives had flocked from far and near, and were already, early as the hour was, lining the route through Berber,

along which the Sirdar, his Staff, General Hunter, and the troops were to pass. The half battalion left behind, some friendlies, and part of Colonel Broadwood's cavalry kept an open way. A salute of twenty-one guns fired by the horse-battery announced the approach of the Sirdar. The cavalry of Colonel Broadwood received him and the staffs, and escorted him to the grand stand, where he was invited by the local notabilities to alight and receive their congratulations and thanks, and partake of their hospitality. Sir Herbert and his Staff having taken up a position upon the stand, the troops of Macdonald's brigade and the cavalry passed in review. Behind the cavalry walked Mahmoud, with his hands tied behind him, his Soudanese guard, and a long string of fellow-captives. The dervish leader was not in the least downcast, but walked with head elate, as a central personage in the parade. He was gibed and hooted in the oriental way as he passed the crowds of those who had but recently cowered before him. Macdonald's men looked fit and well as when they set out, and their bands played not only the Khedival march, but their more popular Scotch tunes, and among others the "Men of Harlech." In the evening the Sirdar continued his journey, proceeding direct to Wady Halfa, and subsequently to Assouan, to settle a question of great importance, namely, the proper equipment and running of the long delayed railway connection from Lower Egypt to the First Cataract. It was to have been completed before the expiration of 1897, and the failure to have it in working order before even the Atbara campaign was

ended had greatly hampered him. As he said to me, "If I had control of the line, it would be in full going order in a fortnight." He succeeded in his mission, as he always does, got the management, and within a week thereafter the trains were running regularly, and the line was open to public traffic.

Slatin Pasha, who may surely with truth pray, 'Save me from my friends,' had been left behind at Wady Halfa during the campaign; for influential foreigners had conceived the notion that the Khalifa, who blames him for most of his recent misfortunes, would attempt by stratagem to wrest him back to torture and death. He came, on the receipt of the first news, promptly up to Berber. There he had Mahmoud and many of the other dervishes brought before him, to learn what they had to say. Mahmoud was disposed to be haughty and impertinent, but Slatin quietly reminded him that their positions were now reversed, and that the dervish could no longer demand money and service from him, under threats of punishment for non-compliance. "You will have to do as I bid you now, and be civil," added Slatin. Mahmoud scowled, and said that was all very well for a little, but that when the Khalifa caught him and the English at Omdurman, they would be made to smart for everything done to the dervishes. Mahmoud was sent off, later, to Wady Halfa, to be interned there, his young cousin or nephew (relationships are so mixed in the Soudan) being allowed to travel with him as his servant.

I have seen and perused several accounts written by officers and privates, which have recently appeared

in various publications, about the battle of the Atbara. Yet as I was there to see and make note, and did so, I am not aware that anything in these narratives throws any fresh light on the action, or should lead me to modify or add anything of length to my own. Certainly there were many wonderful escapes, as often happens, from wounds and death. Of bullets passing through helmets and clothing, and leaving the wearers unscathed, there were not a few. Corporal Laurie, of the Seaforths, was one of those lucky fellows, who acquired the nickname of 'the bullet-proof man.' His own account is curious, as showing what dangers a man may pass safely through. In a letter to his home, published in the *Scotsman*, he said: "The fact is that I got most of the corners of my clothing shot off, while personally I was uninjured. Before I entered the zereba I was not struck, but shortly afterwards a bullet took off the toe of my left shoe without hitting my foot, the shoe being a size too big, for easy marching and sleeping at night. Then my bayonet was struck, and bent over at a right angle. Then a shot went through my sleeve, near my left wrist, tearing two holes, but not hurting myself. Then my rifle was struck while I was loading, the bullet splintering the butt, and being stopped by an iron bolt which it met. This bullet would certainly have gone right into my body but for my rifle being there. Then a nigger in a trench let drive at me with a spear, missed my ribs by an inch, and slit up my haversack. A bullet then grazed the back of my hand just enough to make it bleed. When I reached the river-bank, which was

nearly perpendicular, a shot came from the bottom, about twenty feet below, and a little to the left, which caused the wound I am supposed to have got, and was so curious that I was paraded before the General. It entered through the lid of my right ammunition-pouch, which was open, went into my right coat-pocket, smashing a penknife and two pencils, tore four holes in my shirt, made a surface wound two or three inches long on my left breast, and came out near my left shoulder through my coat and ammunition-pouch braces. In the afternoon I strolled over to the field-hospital and got a piece of dressing on, and it has never troubled me at all."

An officer of the same battalion wrote, and the account appeared in the *Broad Arrow*:—"Somehow or other we advanced, all of us having marvellous escapes, and as we reached the palm belt a new danger arose, as Macdonald's Soudanese brigade struck our right rear, whooping and yelling and sending Martini bullets all around us. At this time young Vandeleur of my regiment was dangerously wounded in the hip, and poor young Gore was shot dead through the lungs. However, it did not last long, for we soon drove the enemy helter-skelter through the palm belt into the broad dry bed of the Atbara, and we then 'gave them beans.' They were plucky fellows, and most of them simply walked away. Our orders were not to advance beyond the river-bank; and as soon as the last of them had disappeared into the bush, the 'cease fire' sounded, and I thanked the Almighty I was safe out of as unpleasant a fight as it was possible to imagine."

For myself, with the Camerons, I thought the fusilade was bad enough, particularly up to and in the process of carrying the zereba and the first line of trenches. I know the sound of bullets hitting in close proximity all around, and I several times caught myself wondering when I was going to get the first one. But not even my clothing was cut, although it has been more than once formerly. At those moments I would have thought myself lucky to have got off with only one wound. I mention the circumstance because, once through the zereba, I mounted my horse, and became too much occupied to indulge in further speculations. It was at that juncture, some of the tukals being fired, an officer called to me if I could make out where a heavy rifle-fire, sweeping our ranks, was coming from. "I think it is from our right," he said. "No," I replied, "it is from the left; I am sure of it." The fact was that at that instant, with our left thrown back, we had passed a number of cross trenches, all occupied by dervish riflemen, and they were shooting into us at close range. When the Warwicks came along, these parties of the enemy were cleared out, and large numbers of them were shot down, within and outside of the south face of the zereba. I think that the fire discipline, and the handling of Macdonald's brigade, as well as Colonel Maxwell's, was such that very few of their bullets passed through the British ranks. In a zereba, with a truculent enemy shooting from cover in all directions, it was impossible to prevent the soldiers from turning to right or left to shoot down some charging foeman. It was a stimulus to our men to

know, as the Highlanders heard from Colonels Murray and Money's own lips, as they went into action, that the news of their conduct would ring in England and the Highlands that same night, through the medium of the press.

I saw much of Mahmoud at Nakheila, in the camp near Dakala, and elsewhere. As the Sirdar dislikes passing personal details either about himself or anyone

MAHMOUD EN ROUTE FOR WADY HALFA (BY TRAIN).

else, I had to bottle up my information until I returned to Lower Egypt, and beyond the limits of the military censorship. From Cairo I wired home the following account of the dervish leader's views of the battle and his experiences :—

Mahmoud Abu Achmed, for that is the manner in which he signs his name, professes utter indifference to captivity, because it will give him an opportunity to see things and draw his own conclusions. I have just

travelled with him by train from Bastinab to Halfa, a thirty-six hours' journey, during which I had frequent opportunities of conversation with him, and of learning his views. He was still in the custody of a native officer and a few men of the 10th battalion. The lad of eighteen, his nephew, bore him company in the brake-van, acting as his servant. Mahmoud's manners can be described as pleasant: he was chatty in talk, and displayed an overweening conceit in his tribe.

He spoke readily enough of the incidents of the recent fighting. It was not till after five o'clock on the morning of the battle, that, according to his description, someone ran into his quarters, crying that our troops were coming. Mounting his horse, Mahmoud rode about and saw everybody in his place, and all in order for the awaited battle. He gave injunctions to his men to lie still and withhold their fire until the Anglo-Egyptian infantry came close. He then returned to his own hut and bomb-proof cave, and awaited events.

The dervish force, he said, numbered 20,000 foot and 4000 cavalry, but the horsemen were half-a-day's journey away, having gone off to let the animals graze. The Arab commander expected us, but not before Saturday. He thought that we would not attack on a Friday, that being a Moslem holy-day. On the next day his troopers were due back at noon. The horses which we saw leaving the zereba, he declared, were only those of emirs and officers, being ridden off by grooms, in order to escape the shells of the attacking force.

If the truth must be told, however, without regard

for Baggara boastfulness, they were part of his cavalry that scampered away on the morning of the battle. Of that I am sure. The dervishes had in the zereba seventeen chief emirs, whose names and the disposition of their force he fully explained to me. Osman Digna, he said, in answer to my question, had gone with the cavalry. It was that officer who had induced him to leave the Nile, promising to show a route whereby he might fall upon Berber unawares. He had, previous to his capture, written to the Khalifa, complaining in strong language of Osman's misdirection, and his general lukewarmness in the cause.

Mahmoud's faith in his followers was extravagant enough. He believed that if his cavalry had been present, and had fallen upon our infantry whilst he attacked us in front, they would have routed us. Mahmoud declined to believe that the British brigade alone, as so many held, could have carried the zereba; for although he thought the English soldiers good, he declared that he had better men in his dem to serve as his bodyguard. Amongst other remarks, he told me that 5000 of his men had no food; Osman had some dhurra hidden in his quarters, whilst his (Mahmoud's) immediate followers had only dhoum nuts and wild fruits. Moreover, the absence of so many of his trusty combatants, who had gone foraging, was the chief cause of his defeat. Our artillery, he added, did little harm, and killed nobody.

This was another absolute untruth. I never saw a higher percentage of losses inflicted by cannon; it was probably as much as 20 per cent.

"Of course," said Mahmoud, "had I known that you possessed so many soldiers, I should have brought more. I had, as a matter of fact, sent for reinforcements, but they did not arrive in time from Omdurman. The war, I assure you, is by no means ended. The Khalifa has men like the sands of the sea. They will meet you at Shabluka and Omdurman, and you cannot conquer, for my master has 60,000 soldiers, many guns, and holds strongly fortified positions, utterly unlike my poor zereba." Had I seen the camels which were left at large before the beginning of the battle? "Well, that was a plan of mine," said he, "for I thought that some of your men might come forward and try to take them, when my people would fire and kill your soldiers." In answer to other queries of mine he replied, "No, I did not run away; I am not a woman. I went into a covered pit to shelter myself. It was needless to expose the person of the General during the firing. I had given all possible directions, and nothing more remained to be done. Nor do I now care what happens to me."

"All the dervish infantry who were with me," he added, "died in the trenches, except those absent searching for food. None ran away." (Another fib.) "We brought a month's supplies from Metemneh, but a great part of that was captured by gunboats. I did not sink your vessels," said Mahmoud, "because I expected their surrender when I took Berber, where I had first planned to go direct, without any waiting. It was Osman who upset things. I had also heard that there were only a few Egyptian soldiers in front of me, of

whom I had not the slightest fear. When I knew that the Sirdar and his army had come up, I could neither advance nor retreat, and chose Nakheila, because it was a good place both for a camp and a fight. Had I stopped in Metemneh for you, I could have beaten the Egyptian army quite easily. As for Nakheila, I could not have left the zereba without fighting; to have gone back would have meant the loss of half my men by desertion or starvation. The Khalifa wrote to me, asking me to return and live with him in Omdurman, but I replied that I was going to take Berber first, which, if I had had dhurra, I could have done. My error was in listening to Osman Digna, and leaving Metemneh and the Nile. Before the bombardment began, if you had not had so many infantry, I would have rushed you, for I cared nothing for your cavalry, and could beat them always, as I have often done before."

Mahmoud asked how long it took the train to go the ten days' camel journey to Halfa, and expressed surprise that it could be done in one day. Seeing the engine quit the train at Shereik, he asked a number of questions. "Where has it gone, for water? Does it drink and eat, too, like men? Is it always a great smoker? Strange devil! does it never get tired? Are there many other such wonders in Cairo?"

Mahmoud drank the soldiers' tea with much relish. He then asked me for clean water, and I gave him a bottle of aerated, which, because it popped and seethed, he was afraid to drink, despite all my explanations. The grinning Soudanese soldiers, who knew its virtues,

then swallowed the mineral-water. He made repeated and anxious inquiries about Mahomed Zain, the ex-dervish governor of Dongola, who was a prisoner at Halfa, wishing to know the nature of Zain's treatment, and whether he was in chains or no. He appeared much relieved to learn that personage was well treated, and living in a house of his own.

"My leg does not hurt me," he continued; "I was scarcely touched; it was Senussi's blood on me which made me look as if I had been wounded." Several photographs which had been taken of him were shown him, and he expressed his delight at recognising himself and those around him. Asking for a photograph of himself, he signed his name at the bottom, borrowing the artist's pen to do so. He said that in the picture shown him his clothes did not look nice, and that he would dress himself and adopt a more becoming and elegant pose, to be taken as he ordinarily appeared in public. At the next stoppage Mahmoud walked out upon the desert clad in a clean jibbeh, and with broad carefully-rolled cotton sash, and had several photos taken, copies of which he imperiously wanted immediately. I succeeded in snapshotting him with a pocket camera. A ground-plan of the battle which I had drawn was shown him. He essayed to correct it, drawing another very crudely in pencil. The zereba he made almost circular; but he had what was of much importance, a complete list of the principal emirs present under him, and the stations allotted to each in the scheme of defence. My plan will be found elsewhere.

At Wady Halfa a terrible change came o'er the

spirit of his dream. The train was stopped outside the walls, a number of native officers who came up and met it bade him descend without parley. With a file of Soudanese on either side and behind him, Mahmoud and his relatives were marched by the back way to prison, where they are now under lock and key. There was no triumphal procession as at Berber, of which he was one of the central figures; no old acquaintances like Slatin Pasha to meet, and be pert with. The populace at Halfa was denied the pleasure of seeing and hooting at Mahmoud, but they saw instead fifty of his dirty, ragged dervishes afterwards taken out of some trucks of the train and escorted to the principal prison in the place.

A week later, several of the gunboats sent up the river returned with news, and with large batches of dervish prisoners. The *Fatah* had an engagement at Aliab with a detachment of fugitives from the battlefield. In their crass ignorance, fearing that our captives would be enslaved, the dervishes refused to surrender. Over 200 were killed in an action which ensued, and 70 were made prisoners. Those taken said that hundreds of their fellows had died of thirst, and got lost upon the road across. The Sirdar sent out messengers in all directions to assure all fugitives of pardon and good treatment if they came in. As for the Abadah and Jaalin, they were duly repressed, and bidden not to ride roughshod over the wretched fleeing dervishes. The Jaalin had a strong antipathy to taking Baggara prisoners, and were given to be silent and smile grimly when asked where their

captives of that tribe were. By the end of April many thousands of prisoners had been sent in to Wady Halfa, and some of them were despatched to Lower Egypt. It was still better to know that the victory of the Atbara afforded an opportunity to hundreds of captives to escape from the Khalifa's clutches and return to their homes, from which they had been long exiled. Among these were ex-soldiers and officers of the Khedive, and traders who had been kept among the dervishes for years. By the beginning of May the desert railway was carried through to Abadia, where there was an open navigable channel to Berber, Khartoum, and beyond. The three additional new, and more heavily armed, gunboats, and a number of barges, were sent through by train in sections to be there re-erected for service in the coming campaign for the capture of Omdurman. Their armaments include quick-firing 15-pounders and Maxims. When the next advance is made, the Sirdar will lead an army of at least 25,000 men against the Khalifa. The artillery will include 5-inch howitzers and 40-pounder Armstrongs. A British division, under General Gatacre, of two or two and a half brigades, will march and fight side by side with four brigades of Khedival troops. The mounted force, as well as the artillery and flotilla, are also to be much augmented—probably four regiments of cavalry and eight companies of camelry. If the Khalifa, as is said, will evacuate the strongly defensible position at the Sixth Cataract (Shabluka), the gunboats will be able to steam without hindrance to and beyond Omdurman. The few old gun-

boats left in Abdullah's hands are worthless for defence or attack, and he will probably sink or burn them. He has an entrenched camp at Kerreri, twenty miles north of Omdurman, and there, it is said, he means to make a big stand. The chief and practically last dervish stronghold is their camp upon the west side of the Mahdist capital. It is two miles or more from the Nile banks, Omdurman lying between. There the Khalifa has raised mud walls ten feet high and ten feet thick, to protect himself and his forces. It is reported he has over 50,000 armed followers left, some sixty cannon, of which a battery consists of 9-centimetre Krupps, and several Nordenfeldt machine guns. If he elects to fight it out at Kerreri, good and well—he will be the sooner disposed of. Should he change his mind, and stand or fall at Omdurman, then there should be some tough hand-to-hand, and later on, house-to-house fighting. It may take one or three days after the Sirdar arrives before Omdurman to manœuvre his men into the position for delivering the assault. Once he gets them there, and gives the word, the result should be a foregone conclusion!

SUPPLEMENTARY CHAPTER.

The Official Despatches.

It is a customary and good rule to append the official despatches. The plan of Mahmoud's camp, however, though issued from official sources, I take exception to. Such 'plotting' as was effected had to be done very hurriedly, for the force only remained a few hours upon the ground. Even in that short space of time the zereba, under the hot sun, had become a loathsome and offensive place. I rode over it as carefully as possible twice, and venture to submit a rough outline of Mahmoud's zereba and its defences. The name and places occupied by his emirs he furnished personally to me.

THE NILE EXPEDITION, 1898.

THE SIRDAR'S DESPATCH.

War Office, May 24, 1898.

A despatch and its inclosure, of which the following are copies, have been received by the Secretary of State for War from the General Officer Commanding the Force in Egypt:—

NILE EXPEDITION, 1898.

From the General Officer Commanding the Force in Egypt to the Under-Secretary of State for War, War Office, London, S.W.

HEADQUARTERS, CAIRO, April 22, 1898.

SIR,—1. I have the honour to forward, for the information of the Secretary of State for War, the accompanying despatch from Major-General Sir Herbert Kitchener, K.C.B., P.C.M.G., Sirdar, describing the operations of the force under his command from 16th March to 8th April, including the expedition to Shendy, the cavalry reconnaissances of 30th March and 4th April, and the battle of the Atbara.

The result of those skilfully conducted operations has been the entire destruction of Mahmoud's army, which left Shendy on 12th March, 18,900 strong.

2. The attack on the dervish position at Shendy, well conceived by the Sirdar, and ably carried out by Brevet-Major Hickman, D.S.O., in command of the infantry, and Commander Keppel, D.S.O., in charge of gunboats, resulted in the destruction of Mahmoud's base, and the evacuation of that position by the dervishes.

3. The cavalry reconnaissances of 30th March and 4th April were skilfully and ably carried out by Major-General Hunter, D.S.O. The gallant charge of the Egyptian cavalry is worthy of notice.

4. In the attack on Mahmoud's camp on 8th April, the British brigade displayed that discipline and those

fighting qualities for which Her Majesty's army has ever been distinguished.

5. The attack, which took place over open ground, against a strongly entrenched position, was conducted with the greatest steadiness and excellent fire discipline, and the assault was delivered with vigour and dash.

6. The Egyptian brigades vied with their British comrades at every phase of the engagement, and the important part which they took in the attack is evident from their list of casualties.

7. The whole of the British wounded were carried by their Egyptian comrades from the battlefield to the Nile, a distance of thirty-six miles, a splendid service, which will tend to strengthen the good-feeling existing between the two forces, which will be a great advantage in the future conduct of the campaign.

8. It would be superfluous on my part to call attention to the services of Sir Herbert Kitchener; but having served with him for many years, I have had the opportunity of watching the development of those soldier-like qualities which have made him the skilful administrator and able General he now is.

9. I would specially call attention to the Sirdar's acknowledgment of the services of Major-General Hunter, D.S.O., and Major-General Gatacre, C.B., D.S.O. Major-General Hunter again showed the ability and gallantry which have distinguished him during his long career in Egypt.

Major-General Gatacre, by the careful training and

gallant leading of his brigade, has fully sustained his former high reputation.

Having had the opportunity of lately working with Major-General Rundle, C.M.G., D.S.O., I fully indorse the Sirdar's favourable mention of him and his staff.—I have, etc.,

F. GRENFELL, Major-General Commanding in Egypt.

HUDI CAMP, ATBARA RIVER, April 10, 1898.

SIR,—The army of the Emir Mahmud, which had, up to 25th February, held a strongly-entrenched position at Metemmeh, having crossed the river to Shendy on that date, reliable information was received that the Khalifa had ordered him to advance, attack Berber, and destroy the railway at Genenetti.

After some delay in making preparations, Mahmud's force moved north from Shendy on 12th March, our gunboats on the river keeping in touch with and harassing the advancing army as far as Aliab, from which point Mahmud left the Nile and struck across the desert to the Atbara river, which he reached between Nakheila and Fahada on 20th March.

On 16th March I concentrated at Kunur a force consisting of—

The British Brigade, with six Maxim guns, under Major-General Gatacre, to which a battery of Egyptian artillery was also attached.

A division of the Egyptian army, under Major-General Hunter, consisting of two brigades, each com-

posed of four battalions, a battery of artillery and Maxim guns, under the respective commands of Lieutenant-Colonels Maxwell and Macdonald.

Eight squadrons of Egyptian cavalry, under Brevet Lieutenant-Colonel Broadwood.

Three batteries of artillery, under Lieutenant-Colonel Long.

The Transport Corps, under Brevet Lieutenant-Colonel Kitchener.

The 1st Battalion, under Captain Doran, was left to hold the store depot and hospital at Berber, and half of the 5th Battalion at Genenetti, under Captain Bainbridge, to watch the railway and lines of communication north.

The concentrated force advanced on 20th March to Hudi, on the Atbara, where it was joined by an Egyptian brigade under Brevet Lieutenant-Colonel Lewis, and a battery of artillery from the Atbara Fort.

The entire force then marched to Ras-el-Hudi, a point at the bend of the Atbara, close to which Mahmud's army, if advancing on Berber, would be forced to pass.

On the following day our cavalry encountered at Abadar a force of dervish horsemen advancing down stream. This contact took place on the thickly-wooded river-bank, where the outposts of Captain the Hon. E. Baring's squadron were driven in, and the squadron commanded by Captain Persse was ordered to clear the bush. This was done with great gallantry and in face of superior numbers of the enemy, who were steadily forced back for four miles.

Finding that we were in force at Ras-el-Hudi, Mahmud, instead of advancing as he originally intended, decided to entrench his position and await supplies from the Khalifa.

On ascertaining this, I sent the 3rd Battalion to release the 15th Battalion garrisoning the Atbara Fort, and despatched the latter, with the Jaalin Arab levies, in three gunboats, to attack Mahmud's reserve depot, which he had left at Hosh Ben Naga, a small village three miles south of Shendy. The expedition was entirely successful.

On the morning of 26th March the gunboats, under Commander Keppel, assisted by Lieutenant Beatty and Lieutenant the Hon. H. Hood, arrived opposite the enemy's position, and landed the troops under the command of Brevet Major Hickman, with whom were Major Sitwell, Captain Sloman, and Lieutenant Graham.

The dervish position was turned and attacked. They made little resistance; and their leader having been killed, they fled, followed by the Jaalin levies and the gunboats, whilst the troops burnt the reserve depot and destroyed the batteries and forts at Shendy.

A large number of women, who had been enslaved by the dervishes after the Jaalin massacre at Metemmeh, were released, and quantities of stores, grain, and cattle were captured, also one of Mahmud's clerks, who stated that the strength of the dervish army, on marching north from Shendy, had been reported officially to the Khalifa to be 18,941 fighting men.

As Mahmud still made no offer to come out of his entrenched camp, I despatched on 30th March eight squadrons of cavalry, the horse-battery, under Brevet Major Young, and four Maxims, under Brevet Major Lawrie and Captain Peake, supported at Abadar by two battalions of infantry, the whole under the command of General Hunter, to reconnoitre his position. This was successfully accomplished, General Hunter having been able to see, from a distance of from 250 to 300 yards, their camp or 'dem,' into which the horse-battery fired some rounds before the reconnoitring force retired.

Our cavalry, supported by infantry, now kept in daily touch with the enemy, whose position was also reconnoitred from the left bank by Major Mahon, Captain Haig, and other officers.

On 4th April the force was moved five miles further on to Abadar, and from here I despatched, on the following day, another reconnaissance of the mounted troops, supported by infantry, under General Hunter as before, and accompanied by Brevet Major Kincaid, A.A.G., Captain Sir H. Rawlinson, D.A.A.G., Lieutenant Smyth, and other officers.

As this force approached the enemy's position, large bodies of their horsemen moved out from their right and left flanks and engaged our cavalry; on being driven back, they were supported by a considerable force of footmen from the 'dem.' General Hunter, in face of this enveloping movement, ordered a retirement, under cover of artillery and Maxim fire. Our cavalry were now closely engaged on both flanks and

rear, when Lieutenant-Colonel Broadwood, with Major Le Gallais's and Captain Persse's squadrons, gallantly charged the dervish horsemen, getting well home, and forcing them to fall back. Captain Persse received a bullet-wound in the forearm.

The effect of the Maxim fire was most marked, enabling our retirement to be quietly and steadily carried out without further interference.

I now determined to attack Mahmud's position, and accordingly advanced on the morning of 6th April to Umdabia, and reconnoitred a further position near Mutrus, which would satisfy the requirements of a resting and watering place during the intended night march on the enemy's camp.

On the following evening (7th April), having left half of the 15th Battalion as guard over hospital, stores, and transport, in strong zereba at Umdabia, the brigade (British leading) advanced to Mutrus, where the force watered and rested till 1 a.m., when the march was resumed in bright moonlight, the route followed being clear of all bush, and circling out into the desert, in order that the positions previously selected could be occupied by daybreak, unseen, if possible, by the enemy.

Captain Fitton, D.A.A.G., directed the line of advance with the greatest accuracy.

When opposite the enemy's position, indicated by their camp fires, and 1½ miles distant from it, the force halted from 3.45 to 4.30 a.m. The brigades then deployed from square into attack formation—British on the left, Macdonald's in the centre, Maxwell's on

the right, and Lewis's brigade, with water and transport, in reserve. In this formation the force advanced to within 600 yards of the dervish 'dem,' which comprised a large irregular inclosure, strongly entrenched all round, palisaded in parts, with innumerable cross trenches, casemates, and straw huts, besides ten palisaded gun emplacements, the whole surrounded by a strong zereba. That portion of the camp nearest to the desert was fairly free of bush, but towards the centre it became thicker, and the rear and flanks closest to the river were concealed in a dense jungle of sunt trees, dom palms, and undergrowth.

From the commanding ground we occupied, numbers of the enemy were observed moving about in the camp, and dense clouds of dust were seen up-stream.

Two good artillery positions were chosen, so as to bring a cross fire on the enemy's entrenchments, and twelve guns came into action at each of those points, assisted by a rocket detachment under Lieutenant Beatty, Royal Navy. At 6.15 a.m. the first gun was fired; all movement in the enemy's camp then ceased, and a body of some 2000 horsemen were seen advancing towards our cavalry, which occupied a commanding position on the extreme left; they were received by a heavy Maxim fire, which drove them back into the belt of dom palms, where they remained for some time, threatening our left flank.

During the artillery bombardment, which lasted an hour and a half, and which was most efficiently carried out, the enemy showed little activity—a few desultory shots only being fired.

At 7.15 a.m. the infantry were ordered to form in column for assault; the British were disposed in three columns, covered by a battalion in line with the Maxims on the left, whilst the Egyptian force had in each brigade two battalions, covering a central assaulting column in double companies, with extreme right flank well protected. One battalion of the reserve brigade formed square in a central position round the transport and water, leaving two battalions in rear of the extreme left flank.

At 7.40 a.m. I sounded the general advance, and as the infantry approached the crest line dominating the trenches the enemy opened fire, gradually increasing in intensity as the crest was reached, and the assaulting columns, now suffering many casualties, steadily and unflinchingly bore down towards the zereba, with pipes and bands playing; advancing by successive rushes, they surmounted this obstacle, carrying most gallantly the first line of trenches and stockades at the point of the bayonet. The guns and Maxims accompanying the infantry swept the trenches and ground in front with case and Maxim fire.

The advance through the 'dem' was steadily continued, trench after trench being cleared, down to the river-bank, where the troops arrived at 8.35 a.m. and re-formed. The two battalions of the reserve brigade co-operated in this movement on the extreme left, as well as Captain Payton's squadron, which had been sent down to the river-bank on the extreme right previous to the general advance.

The pursuit was taken up by the cavalry, but owing to the thick bush it could not be continued far. The dervish losses are estimated at over 3000 killed within and around the zereba. A large number of prisoners, quantities of banners, war drums, rifles, and ten guns were also captured, besides the entire baggage of the dervish army.

With the exception of Osman Digna and three other chiefs, all the important emirs were killed, and Mahmud was taken prisoner by the 10th Battalion, under the command of Major Nason.

Nothing could exceed the steadiness and excellent fire discipline of the troops throughout the engagement. An observation was made, with which I fully concur, that had a force at peace manœuvres attacked over similar obstacles, a better line and a steadier advance could not have been maintained.

I deeply regret the loss of Captains Urquhart and Findlay (Cameron Highlanders), and Second Lieutenant Gore (Seaforth Highlanders), who fell, gallantly leading their men over the trenches.

Our further losses amount in the British brigade to 22 non-commissioned officers and men killed, and 10 officers and 82 non-commissioned officers and men wounded.

In the Egyptian army, 57 non-commissioned officers and men were killed, and 5 British and 16 native officers and 365 non-commissioned officers and men wounded.

A field hospital was established, in which all the wounded were dressed, and the troops marched back

at 4 p.m. to Umdabia, where all the wounded were brought in.

The action having been decisive, the troops returned by independent brigades and short marches to their quarters on the Nile, the wounded being carried to the hospital at Atbara Fort, where all arrangements for their comfort and subsequent transfer by boat north had been made.

I cannot speak too highly of the behaviour of all ranks during the long and trying day, which showed to the greatest advantage the discipline, courage, and endurance of the whole force.

My special thanks are due to Major-General Hunter, who throughout the operations gave additional proof of those valuable and soldierlike qualities which I have frequently had the pleasure of bringing to the favourable notice of Her Majesty's Government. He was indefatigable alike in the preliminary reconnaissances and during the general engagement, in which he led his division over the trenches with great gallantry: to his care and foresight I attribute much of the success which has attended the campaign on the Atbara.

The high state of efficiency to which the British brigade was brought is, I consider, in a large measure due to the untiring energy and devotion to duty of Major-General Gatacre and the loyal support rendered him by the commanding officers of battalions, all of whom he has brought to favourable notice. During the engagement on the 8th inst. General Gatacre showed a fine example of gallant leading. The cordiality and good-feeling existing between the

British and Egyptian troops who have fought shoulder to shoulder is to a great extent due to the hearty co-operation of General Gatacre, and I cannot speak too highly of the services rendered by him and the troops under his command during the recent operations.

I fully confirm General Hunter's remarks on the valuable services of the three brigadiers commanding the infantry brigades, viz., Lieutenant-Colonel Maxwell, Brevet Lieutenant-Colonel Lewis, and Brevet Lieutenant-Colonel Macdonald. They handled their troops with precision, leading them gallantly in action, and they have shown themselves fully qualified as commanders of troops in the field.

The medical arrangements of the British brigade, under Brigade-Surgeon-Lieutenant-Colonel M'Namara and his staff, and of the Egyptian army, under the direction of Brigade-Surgeon-Lieutenant-Colonel Gallwey and his staff, were, under the somewhat difficult circumstances of the operations, satisfactory, and the energy and skill displayed by the medical staff under their direction is deserving of much credit.

General Gatacre has also brought to my notice—and I fully indorse his remarks—the care, attention, and personal kindness received by the whole brigade from the Rev. R. Brindle, Roman Catholic Chaplain; Rev. J. Simms, Presbyterian Chaplain; and Rev. A. W. Watson, Church of England Chaplain, who have been indefatigable in their efforts to minister to the sick and wounded at all hours.

A very noticeable feature in the late operations was the efficiency and good organisation of the camel trans-

port, reflecting great credit on Lieutenant-Colonel Kitchener, Director of Transport, and his staff.

The long line of communications extending from Assouan south was placed under the command of Major-General Rundle, and it was due to the energy displayed by his staff and the officers commanding stations that the troops were kept amply supplied.

My thanks are due to Brevet Colonel Wingate, and the Intelligence Staff under him, who kept me fully informed, as well as to the other members of my staff, who performed their various duties to my entire satisfaction.

In addition to the services of those officers whose names I have specially mentioned in the body of the despatch, I would also bring to your notice the valuable services of the following officers, non-commissioned officers, and men :—

Headquarters Staff.

Major à Court (temporarily attached), Captain Watson, A.D.C., Captain Blunt (Senior Officer, Supplies and Stores), Lieutenant Gorringe (Senior Officer), Lieutenant Lord E. Cecil, A.D.C., Lieutenant Manifold (Senior Officer, Telegraphs).

British Brigade.

Brigade Staff.—Major Snow (Brigade Major), Captain Brooke, A.D.C., Captain Fair (Senior Officer), Lieutenant Pigott (Senior Officer).

Artillery.—Major Hunter Blair, Lieutenant Owen.

Infantry.—Warwickshire—Lieutenant-Colonel Jones (commanding), Major Landon, Lieutenant and Adjutant Earle, Lieutenant Greer (wounded). Lincolnshire—Colonel Verner (commanding, wounded), Major Simpson, Major Mainwaring, Captain Forrest, Lieutenant and Adjutant Marsh, Lieutenant Boxer (wounded), Lieutenant Tatchell. Seaforth Highlanders—Colonel Murray (commanding, wounded), Major Campbell, Major Jameson, Captain Egerton, Captain Baillie (wounded), Lieutenant Vandeleur (wounded), Lieutenant and Adjutant Ramsden, Second Lieutenant Daniell. Cameron Highlanders — Colonel Money (commanding), Major Watson-Kennedy, Major Napier (wounded), Captain Honourable A. Murray, Lieutenant and Adjutant Campbell.

Departments. — Medical Staff — Surgeon - Major Braddell, Surgeon-Major Carr, Surgeon-Major Adamson, Surgeon-Captain Mathias, Surgeon-Lieutenant Bliss.

Army Pay Department.—Honorary Captain Smith.

Veterinary Department. — Veterinary - Lieutenant Russell.

Non-commissioned Officers and Men.—Seaforth Highlanders — Colour - Sergeant M'Iver, Corporal Lawrie. Cameron Highlanders — Colour-Sergeant Fisher, Private Cross, Private Chalmers. Army Service Corps—Staff-Sergeant Wyeth.

Egyptian Army.

Cavalry.—Captain His Serene Highness Prince Francis of Teck, Lieutenant the Marquis of Tullibardine.

Artillery.—Captain de Rougemont.

Camel Corps.—Captain King.

Infantry.—Brigade Majors—Major Maxse, Brevet Major Keith-Falconer, Captain Asser. 2nd Battalion—Major Pink (commanding), Lieutenant Strickland. 3rd Battalion—Lieutenant-Colonel Sillem (commanding), Captain Blewitt. 4th Battalion—Brevet Major Sparkes (commanding). 9th Battalion — Captain Walter (commanding, wounded), Lieutenant Ravenscroft. 10th Battalion — Brevet Major Fergusson, Captain MacBean. 11th Battalion — Brevet Major Jackson (commanding), Captain Stanton. 12th Battalion—Brevet Lieutenant-Colonel Townshend (commanding), Captain Ford-Hutchinson, Captain Honourable C. Walsh (wounded), Lieutenant Harley (wounded). 13th Battalion — Brevet Lieutenant-Colonel Collinson, Captain Godden. 14th Battalion—Brevet Major Shekleton (commanding, wounded), Captain Hamilton, Captain Matthews.

Departments. — Medical Staff — Surgeon-Captain Penton, Surgeon-Captain Hill Smith, Surgeon-Captain Spong, Surgeon-Captain Dunn.

Transport Corps.—Captain Williams, Second Lieutenants Healey and M'Key.

Non-commissioned Officers. — Cavalry — Serjeant-

Major Blake. Infantry — Lance-Sergeant Russell, Sergeant Scott-Barbour, Sergeant Hilton (wounded), Sergeant Handley (wounded), Colour-Sergeant Kelham, Colour-Sergeant Shepperd.—I have, etc.,

HERBERT KITCHENER, Sirdar.

Major-General Sir Francis Grenfell, G.C.M.G., K.C.B., etc., Commanding the Forces in Egypt.

SPECIAL ARMY ORDER.

THE QUEEN'S CONGRATULATIONS.

A Special Army Order has been issued as follows :—

"The Commander-in-Chief is directed by the Secretary of State for War to convey to Major-General Sir Herbert Kitchener Her Majesty's congratulations upon the brilliant success of his recent campaign in the Soudan.

"The operations, ably planned by the commander, and gallantly carried out by the troops under him, reflect the greatest credit on all ranks. Sir H. Kitchener was well seconded by Major-General Hunter and by Major-General Gatacre and the other brigadiers, and the leadership throughout was at once careful and enterprising.

"The march of the British Brigade to the Atbara, when in six days—for one of which it was halted—it covered 140 miles in a most trying climate, shows

what British troops can do when called upon. In the final attack upon the enemy's position, the Egyptian soldiers showed themselves well worthy to fight shoulder to shoulder with our own.

"The Commander-in-Chief desires that Sir H. Kitchener will convey to all ranks his high appreciation of the spirit displayed throughout, and of the courage and discipline which have characterised the whole force.

"The good services of all those brought to notice will be considered at the conclusion of this year's operations."

WAR OFFICE RETURN OF CASUALTIES

(BRITISH ONLY).

NOMINAL ROLL OF OFFICERS, WARRANT OFFICERS, NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICERS AND MEN WOUNDED IN ACTION AT NEICHLA (ATBARA) ON THE 8TH APRIL 1898.

Regiment or Corps.	Rank and Name.		Nature of Wound or Injury.	Remarks.
	*Officers. Killed,** 3. *Wounded*, 10.			* Names not included in this Return.
1st Batt. Royal Warwickshire, .	Lieut.	Green, M., . .	Wound, right hip.	
1st Batt. Lincolnshire, . .	Col.	Verner, T. E., .	,, face.	
,, ,, . .	Lieut.	Boxer, H. E. R., .	Fracture, right leg.	
,, ,, . .	,,	Rennie, C. J., .	,, finger.	
1st Batt. Seaforth Highlanders,	Col.	Murray, C.B., R.H.,	Wound, left elbow.	
,, ,, ,,	Capt.	Baillie, A. C. D., .	Fracture, left leg.	Afterwards died at Cairo.
,, ,, ,,	,,	Maclachlan, N. C.,	Wound, right leg.	
,, ,, ,,	Lieut.	Vandeleur, R. S., .	,, ,, hip.	
,, ,, ,,	,,	Thomson, N. A., .	,, left foot.	
1st Batt. Cameron Highlanders,	Major	Napier, R. F. L., .	,, right thigh.	Afterwards died at Cairo.
	*Non-Commissioned Officers and Men. Killed,** 14. *Wounded*, 90.			* Names not included in Return.
1st Batt. Royal Warwickshire, .	Sergt.	Gage, G., . .	Fracture, right tibia.	
,, ,, ,, .	Corp.	Belcher, C., .	Wound, left ankle.	
,, ,, ,, .	,,	Birbeck, G., .	,, chest.	
,, ,, ,, .	L.-Corp.	James, H., . .	,, right hand.	
,, ,, ,, .	Private	Power, A., . .	,, chest.	Since died.
,, ,, ,, .	,,	Gallagher, W., .	,, left thigh.	
,, ,, ,, .	,,	James, A., . .	,, left knee.	

,, ,, ,, .		,,	left ankle.
,, ,, ,, .	,,	Preece, S., . .	right leg.
,, ,, ,, .	,,	Martin, P., . .	right shoulder.
,, ,, ,, .	,,	Southall, A., . .	right thigh.
,, ,, ,, .	,,	Worley, J., . .	,, ,, Since died.
,, ,, ,, .	,,	Hale, T., . .	neck. Since died.
1st Batt. Lincolnshire, . .	,,	Lee, M., . .	chest.
,, ,, . .	Corp.	Carter F. W., .	left foot.
,, ,, . .	,,	Lincoln, G., .	left thigh.
,, ,, . .	Private	Shrubshall, H., .	left ankle.
,, ,, . .	,,	Scott, F., . .	both thighs. Since died.
,, ,, . .	,,	Taylor, F., . .	left ankle.
,, ,, . .	,,	Mather, E., .	Fracture, left patella and tibia.
,, ,, . .	,,	Dale, G., . .	,, right forearm.
,, ,, . .	,,	Gordt, I., . .	Abrasion, left leg.
,, ,, . .	,,	Garton, H., .	Wound, right arm.
,, ,, . .	,,	Allen, F., . .	,, left shoulder.
,, ,, . .	,,	Barham, W., .	,, right leg.
,, ,, . .	,,	Spencer, T., .	Fracture, little finger.
,, ,, . .	,,	Massam, J., .	Wound, finger.
1st Batt. Seaforth Highlanders,	,,	Spencer, R., .	,, right shoulder.
,, ,, ,,	Cr.-Sergt.	M'Iver, I., . .	,, ,, ,,
,, ,, ,,	Corp.	Burras, W., . .	,, chest.
,, ,, ,,	,,	Lawrie, J., . .	Fracture, right leg.
,, ,, ,,	Drummer	Fairbairn, D., .	Wound, ,, ,,
,, ,, ,,	Private	Lawrence, J., .	,, back.
,, ,, ,,	,,	Mackie, D., .	,, neck.
,, ,, ,,	,,	Gray, A., . .	Fracture, left knee.
,, ,, ,,	,,	Douglas, H., .	Wound, ,, ,,
,, ,, ,,	,,	Herbertson, T., .	Fracture, right tarsus.
,, ,, ,,	,,	Miller, D., . .	Wound, right knee.
,, ,, ,,	,,	Gray, W., . .	,, head.
,, ,, ,,	,,	Redman, T., .	,, neck.
,, ,, ,,	,,	Sarahs, W., . .	,, right leg.
,, ,, ,,	,,	M'Connell, C., .	,, ,, shoulder.
	,,	Brown, W., . .	

NOMINAL ROLL OF OFFICERS, WARRANT OFFICERS, NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICERS AND MEN,—*continued.*

Regiment or Corps.	Rank and Name.		Nature of Wound or Injury.	Remarks.
1st Batt. Seaforth Highlanders,	Private	Kermack, I.,	Fracture, little finger.	
,, ,, ,,	,,	Mackay, D.,	Wound, right knee.	
,, ,, ,,	,,	Mackay, D.,	,, ,, ankle.	
,, ,, ,,	,,	Payne, A.,	,, left shoulder.	
,, ,, ,,	,,	Eldridge, J.,	,, right ,,	
,, ,, ,,	,,	Bowman, W.,	,, abdomen.	Since died.
,, ,, ,,	,,	Devlin, I.,	,, chest.	Since died.
,, ,, ,,	,,	Ross, H.,	,, ,,	
,, ,, ,,	,,	Colquhoun, T.,	,, left thigh.	
1st Batt. Cameron Highlanders,	Sergt.	Ross, J.,	,, ,, hand.	
,, ,, ,,	Corp.	M'Leod, D.,	Fracture, right forearm.	
,, ,, ,,	L.-Corp.	Barrowby, H.,	Wound, back.	
,, ,, ,,	,,	Wragg, C.,	Fracture, left tibia.	
,, ,, ,,	,,	Robson, W.,	Wound, left arm.	
,, ,, ,,	Private	Bishop, W.,	Fracture, right patella and tibia.	
,, ,, ,,	,,	Kelly, I.,	Wound, left leg.	
,, ,, ,,	,,	Watt, E.,	,, right thigh.	
,, ,, ,,	,,	Cunningham, D.B.,	,, left hip.	
,, ,, ,,	,,	Bain, W.,	Fracture, right leg.	
,, ,, ,,	,,	Smedley, E.,	Wound, right thigh.	
,, ,, ,,	,,	M'Christison, J.,	,, ,, shoulder.	
,, ,, ,,	,,	Piper, J.,	Fracture, left patella and tibia.	
,, ,, ,,	,,	Tooley, E.,	Wound, left hip.	Since died.
,, ,, ,,	,,	Brown, D.,	,, right thigh.	
,, ,, ,,	,,	Drewed, W.,	,, ,, ,,	
,, ,, ,,	,,	M'Kenzie, J.,	Fracture, right patella.	
,, ,, ,,	,,	Simmons, F.,	Wound, left elbow.	
,, ,, ,,	,,	Hawkins, J.,	,, ,, leg.	

,,	,,	,,	,,	Gabriel, W.,	.	,,	,,	thigh.	
,,	,,	,,	,,	Smith, G.,	.	,,	,,	side.	
,,	,,	,,	,,	Ingram, J.,	.	,,		right arm.	
,,	,,	,,	,,	M'Donald, J.,	.	,,		head.	
,,	,,	,,	,,	Gauld, J.,	.	,,		left hand.	
,,	,,	,,	,,	Hitchcox, W.,	.	,,		right leg.	
,,	,,	,,	,,	Richards, J.,	.	Fracture, finger.			
,,	,,	,,	,,	Cox, J.,	.	Wound, left thigh.			
,,	,,	,,	,,	Palmer, G.,	.	Fracture, left thumb.			
,,	,,	,,	,,	Bain, A.,	.	Wound, back.			
,,	,,	,,	,,	Rushton, R.,	.	,,		right thigh.	
,,	,,	,,	,,	Phin, J.,	.	,,		leg.	
,,	,,	,,	,,	Gilbert, G.,	.	,,		left shoulder.	
,,	,,	,,	,,	Belcher, A.,	.	Abrasion, elbow.			
,,	,,	,,	,,	Long, E.,	.	Wound, left leg.			
,,	,,	,,	,,	Smith, W.,	.	,,		right thigh.	
,,	,,	,,	,,	Williamson, W.,	.	,,		head.	Since died.
,,	,,	,,	,,	M'Kee, R.,	.	,,		left thigh.	Since died.
,,	,,	,,	,,	Markham, F.,	.	,,		neck.	Since died.
,,	,,	,,	L.-Sergt.	Wyeth, G. R.,	.	Fracture, left patella and leg.			
Army Service Corps,									

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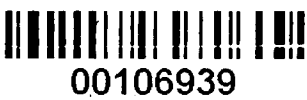

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